THE WESTSIDER

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Issue #122
SEPTEMBER 26

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INNER WEST ART FAIR
16,17 & 18 OCT
Williamstown Town Hall
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TICKETS

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Editor's note

The Westsider team celebrated a very special milestone in August. On a cold and wintry night at Kindred Studios in Yarraville members of our radio team gathered for inaugural drinks to meet each other and honour the achievements of the last year.

For those who haven't been paying attention, The Westsider launched an internet radio station last year to amplify the voices and music of the West. It's been a very steep learning curve for all involved but thanks to the passion and efforts of a small team of volunteers we are now broadcasting an incredible offering of local voices and music.

A massive shout out to station manager Adam Weatherhead and program manager Mario Pinti, as well as Jean Anselmi, Adam Hutterer, Harvey Jepson, and the incredible streaming and listen-back uploading teams.

I urge you to head to westsiderradio.com.au and check out some of the fantastic programs on offer.

A great start would be **Westside Stories** hosted by Fiona Scott-Norman, a fortnightly exploration of arts events in the West including interviews with some of the incredible creatives who live here.

Beyond the Surface hosted by Muffy Nujuma Nunu celebrates cool people doing kind things.

For music lovers I'd recommend **Afroculture** hosted by Tobe featuring a vast array of Afrobeats. There's also **Doorstep,** hosted by Marcus Brooke-Smith, a monthly taste of music in the West including local artists, local gigs and local releases. And there's **Frownland**, hosted by Joshua Hodson-Smith owner of Footscray Records covering everything from devotional drones and darkwave obscurities to country heartbreak and free jazz.

There's plenty of content created by young Westies too like **Owen and Wolfgang Reydio Show**, **High Voltage**, and **Come Chat With Us**.

Footy fans can't go past **The One-Eyed Dog** – three blokes providing a very biased account of the Western Bulldogs with 'limited insightful analysis'. And my personal favourite **Hidden Letters** hosted by Kyle Connolly and Jacob Tiauli, uncovering the hidden figures, events and queer histories of the West.

But honestly, I'm just scraping the surface here. With close to 40 shows and podcasts on offer there's truly something for everyone at Westsider Radio, and it's all algorithm free!

If you'd like to volunteer at Westsider Radio contact stationmanager@westsiderradio.com.au.

If you're a local musician wanting to get your tracks played contact musicmanager@westsiderradio.com.au

Enjoy!!!

Barbara Heggen

Got a comment?
Keen to submit an article?
Like to support or advertise in a community paper?
Feel free to get in touch at: editor@thewestsider.com.au

Your voice

Yarraville LXRP

I represent a group of 20 Yarraville shop owners that are strongly against the permanent closure of Anderson St as part of planned level crossing removal. We have had no genuine consultation. Closure of our street will destroy our trade and livelihoods!

Hoping that someone at your organisation can help shine light on our plight.

Tim Chang

Data Centres – From Westsider social pages

Thing is everyone uses online services and therefore it needs these services. You cant complain without having a suitable solution and people everywhere will always complain.

Sharon Pacifici

Sick of all these pretty words from politicians who have no accountability. Why were the data centres even allowed to be built in the first place so near to houses. What good is a 'productive' chat with the premier now when the damn thing is already built. Shouldn't the politician be getting on the front foot and rejecting the data centres on behalf of the residents before it was approved for construction rather than waiting on residents to protest first and then 'oh now I will start doing my job'.

Allen Tong

I feel for these residents and what they've gone through. That land was always industrial. What would they have preferred there? Anything that was built there was always going to be seen as bad.

Gran Sale

If you use thermal imagining on the data centre you'll see how much heat they emit. The areas around them are 10 degrees hotter, worse in Summer. They will be cooking our neighbourhoods and the whole planet. What happened to lowering emissions and global warming???

Lucia Mocnay

Footscrays Forges site from The Westsider social pages

17 years. That seems like more than enough time for action at state or local government levels.

Banco needs to come out from under their rock and engage with the community. If they can't do anything with the site they should sell it. This also applies to the owners of the other abandoned development sites in Footscray's CBD. If not for their own self interests, at least for the community. Someone has to make the first move to reverse Footscray's decline. Small efforts just aren't going to cut it. In fact, they are arguably counterproductive as attracting a few new people to the area just reinforces the negative perceptions.

Adam Hutterer

How about putting the new Basketball stadium there instead of putting it on the green space at McIvor reserve like the council is planning to do. It is a no brainer

Basketball stadium on Brown space - YES

Basketball stadium on green space - NO

jacqui.5.8

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Local Impact's purpose is to grow community ideas through participation, support and connection in Melbourne's inner west. Discover how Local Impact can power your community ideas at localimpact.org.au.

APC

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If you believe the Standards may have been breached, you may approach the Westsider or make a complaint to the Australian Press Council in writing at www.presscouncil.org.au. The Council may also be contacted on 1800 025 712.

CNAV
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MEMBER 2026

The Westsider Newspaper is the 2025 CNAV award winner for:

Best Design and Layout

Cover illustration by Julia Bevis

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OPINION

Opposition to AI Data Centres continues to grow, uniting political divides

By Peter Gartside

When, back in June 2025, The Westsider published an article pointing out the rapid growth of data centres in the West, we were definitely onto something. Since then, campaigners have unearthed more applications and approvals, and construction has begun on several more hyperscale facilities in the West, including the CDC Laverton AI data centre that sparked the initial article.

Despite the lack of publicly available documentation, in the last few months the issue of data centres, their power and water use, noise pollution and environmental impacts, and the undemocratic way they have been foisted on unwitting communities, has gone mainstream. Now the issue threatens to have a significant impact on marginal seats in the forthcoming state election.

So on a damp August Sunday, around 250 people rallied at Hansen Reserve in West Footscray to express their serious concerns about the rollout of these massive projects and to call for a moratorium on any further data centre approvals and a pause on construction.

The gathering was remarkable for the way it brought together people from across the political spectrum. Indeed it's hard to think of another issue that has united such a cross section of the community. Speakers included the candidates for the Footscray electorate, and members of the Citizens of Tottenham group who found themselves living next door to the Next DC M3 facility when few of us knew what a data centre was. They've had over three years of disruption, noise and light pollution from constant construction and their stories reflected the impact on them as a community.

The rally then walked to the NextDC data centre in Tottenham, a visit to which is highly recommended for anyone concerned about this issue. Its size and proximity to people's houses are really confronting, and the company has now applied for a second expansion, a decision on which currently sits with the Minister for Planning.

The non-partisan coalition that came together to coordinate the rally included people from as far west as Melton and Diggers Rest and from other parts of the metropolitan area. As well as playing a part in organising the rally, Borderlands Cooperative has helped research and collate information to track all Victorian data centres, from initial application to completed construction, into a wiki site.

Borderlands's Coordinator Jorge Jorquera says this will be a powerful tool for campaigners, since one of the problems has been the lack of publicly accessible information on data centre projects. "The wiki will include alerts when a new application is lodged with the Department of Transport and Planning, or an infrastructure upgrade seems to indicate a likely data centre project in the offing," he says.

Perhaps the single issue that unites all the campaigners for a moratorium is the feeling that the public is being kept in the dark and not consulted. Under the state government's Development Facilitation Program (DFP), planning applications bypass local councils and so any opportunity for democratic oversight.

David Ettershanks MP told the rally that the DFP acts as a 'black box'. He called for the public release of the Sustainable Data Centre Action Plan, which the government continues to refer campaigners to, but, remarkably, has so far refused to produce, even to parliament.

As The Westsider flagged over a year ago, once construction is complete, data centres provide almost no jobs: the tech is imported and coupled to the grid, maintenance is remote, and the processors are junked, not fixed, once they start to fail. They use a massive amount of power and will have priority access to the grid. There's every possibility that data centre power use will be responsible for rising domestic energy bills.

We'll continue to monitor data centre developments here in the West. And, thanks to the hard work of local campaigners, readers can now do the same at datacentremoratorium.net.

Be Bold Festival 2026

We are big. We are bold. We are Brimbank.

Brimbank City Council's Be Bold Festival brings art and culture to Melbourne's western suburbs! The festival brings together people of all different walks of life who live, work and play in Brimbank. Celebrate our diverse community through music, art, interactive workshops, children's activities, bilingual storytime, food and culture.

The festival kicks off with cultural performances by Djirri Djirri Dancers, PICAA, Pearl Afrikulture Rhythms, Wiradjuri singer-songwriter Ruby Mae, L2R Dance and MC Candy Bowers, alongside a Bowery Theatre line-up including Resonate Acoustic: Youth Music Showcase, a weaving workshop with Mata'ala Pasifika Weave Mamas and Dance Lab Live with Sheena Chundee. Food lovers can enjoy global cooking demos in the Cultural Kitchen with Cultivating Community, a range of food vendors, and the St Albans Food Tour, while families can explore a huge range of creative workshops and activities – from Cortex's immersive inflatable installation to nature art, printmaking, lantern-making, neon wearable art, yarn and stitch, floral funscapes, storytelling and more, plus facepainting and roving entertainment.

Don't miss Marc Sorbello's exhibition Colourful Stories in the Bowery Gallery, with a celebration from 5–6pm, before the day wraps up with dancing to DJ Prince Zade, entertainment by The Huxleys, and a Lantern Parade celebrating the mid-Autumn (Full Moon) festival.

Be Bold Festival 2026
Saturday 3 October, 3–7pm
Bowery Theatre
St Albans Community Centre and Errington Oval Reserve
33 Princess Street, St Albans
Free of charge I All ages
All welcome
creativebrimbank.com.au/bbf

SUPPORTER CONTENT

Give your clothing another chance at the new drop-off hub for wearable and worn-out clothing at Footscray Library.

Council is partnering with Green Collect to help our community sort their clothing sustainably. The trial will run from **1 September until 16 October, 2026.**

Scan the QR code to take you to:
maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/clothes

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A universal design perspective for Yarraville's LXRP – Are we asking the right questions?

OPINION

By Claire Tierney

There is no question that Yarraville's Anderson Street level crossing needs to be addressed. Safety matters. Congestion matters.

Improving the connection across the railway is an important investment in Yarraville's future, and like many locals, I've stood waiting at the boom gates wondering why such a short journey can sometimes take so long and that frustration is real.

But I wonder if we've allowed that frustration to become the question we're trying to solve and perhaps the question isn't simply, "How do we remove the delay?". Perhaps it should be, "What kind of place do we want Yarraville to become?"

As someone who uses a wheelchair and works professionally in accessibility and universal design, I find myself looking at the proposal through a different lens. My first thought wasn't whether it solved an engineering problem. It was much simpler. Have we asked the people who depend on accessible design every day, whether we've explored the best possible solution?

That question isn't only for people who are ably challenged. Have wheelchair users, older residents, parents, local businesses and people with lived experience of accessibility been invited to help imagine what could be possible?

Have we looked carefully at contemporary examples from around the world before deciding what is right for Yarraville? I honestly don't know. And that uncertainty is why I believe we should pause, long enough to ask a few more questions, because this project is about much more than crossing a railway line – it's about protecting something that makes Yarraville genuinely special.

As an independent woman living alone and using a wheelchair, my independence depends on far more than accessible footpaths and lifts. It depends on feeling part of a community.

In Yarraville, I'm not simply another customer. People know me. If I can't get into a shop, staff will often come outside to serve me on the footpath. Café owners stop for a chat. Familiar faces ask how I'm doing. Those moments might seem small, but to someone living independently they are profoundly important. They create a quiet confidence that I belong here – that I'm not an inconvenience, but a valued member of the community.

That sense of belonging can't be designed into a building, and it can't be measured on an engineering drawing. It grows over years through independent businesses, familiar faces and the everyday kindness that develops when people genuinely know one another. It is one of the reasons I chose to make Yarraville my home, and one of the reasons I care so deeply about its future.

My concern is not simply whether the new crossing will move people efficiently. It is whether the design reflects the very qualities that make Yarraville such an extraordinary place to live. At the moment, I don't believe it does. Nor do I believe it reflects the spirit of universal design – not just creating accessible infrastructure, but creating places where everyone feels they belong.

Universal design has never been about creating a separate route for wheelchair users. It's about creating places that work naturally for everyone: parents with prams, older residents, children on scooters, cyclists, travellers with luggage and people whose mobility changes throughout life.

Good accessibility is simply good design. I don't pretend to know the engineering answer. I don't know whether the current proposal is the best solution or whether there is a better one. What I do know is that I haven't yet seen a conversation that genuinely explores the full range of possibilities before decisions become permanent.

Many of the world's most loved communities share remarkably similar qualities. They are built on a human scale. Their streets encourage people to walk rather than hurry. Mature trees soften public spaces. Independent businesses thrive alongside one another, and public places evolve naturally around the way people actually live.

Yarraville has those same qualities. That is why people often describe it as feeling European, not because it looks like Europe, but because it shares the same principles of thoughtful placemaking that make so many villages memorable long after we've left them.

When we stand at the boom gates wishing the crossing would open sooner, it's easy to think we're only asking for a faster journey. In reality, we may also be making decisions about the future character of our village. Solving today's frustration can mean permanently closing roads, removing mature trees, affecting much-loved local businesses and reshaping the places that give Yarraville its identity.

Once those changes are made, they are rarely reversed.

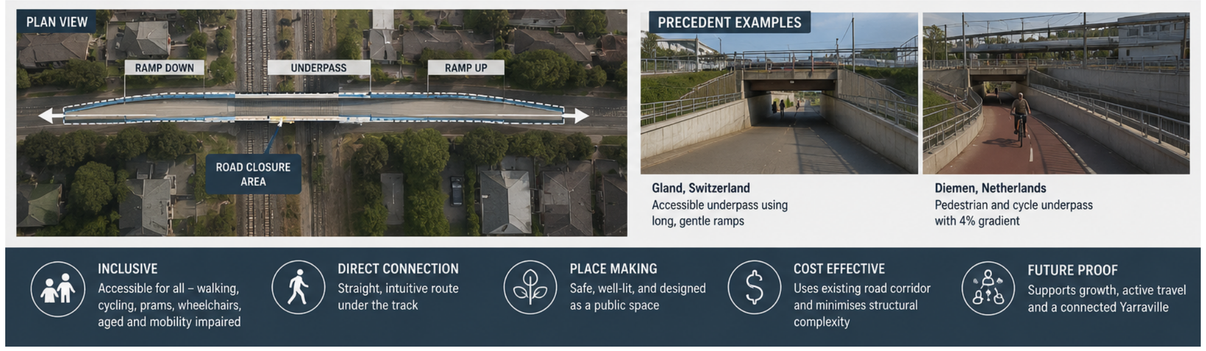
Looking internationally, there are countless examples of communities that have solved similar challenges in ways that are elegant, contemporary and genuinely inclusive. Some use generous pedestrian bridges with large-capacity lifts. Others create beautifully integrated shared pathways that everyone uses together. They don't separate accessibility from the rest of the design– they make accessibility the design.

Whether any of those approaches are appropriate for Yarraville isn't for me to decide, but I do believe they deserve to be part of the conversation. So this isn't about arguing for one particular bridge, lift or underpass. It's about making sure we've explored every thoughtful possibility before permanently reshaping one of Melbourne's most distinctive villages.

The station precinct is Yarraville's front door. It forms first impressions for visitors and daily experiences for residents. Whatever we build there will shape how this village feels for generations and if we can improve safety while preserving the intimate, welcoming character that makes Yarraville unique, then surely that is the outcome worth striving for.

Before we make decisions that cannot easily be undone, I hope we ask a few more questions. Not only about engineering. Not only about cost. But about community, inclusiveness and about universal design. Because long after the boom gates are gone, the village we leave behind will remain.

Claire Tierney is a Universal Design & Inclusive Communities Consultant | Keynote Speaker | Community Engagement | Lived Experience Advisor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RAMP DOWN
UNDERPASS
RAMP UP
ROAD CLOSURE AREA
PRECEDENT EXAMPLES
Gland, Switzerland
Accessible underpass using long, gentle ramps
Diemen, Netherlands
Pedestrian and cycle underpass with 4% gradient
INCLUSIVE
Accessible for all – walking, cycling, prams, wheelchairs, aged and mobility impaired
DIRECT CONNECTION
Straight, intuitive route under the track
PLACE MAKING
Safe, well-lit, and designed as a public space
COST EFFECTIVE
Uses existing road corridor and minimises structural complexity
FUTURE PROOF
Supports growth, active travel and a connected Yarraville

Part of an image created by Claire Tierney with AI – based on research into universal design solutions in Europe.

Trung Luu **MP**

*LIBERAL MEMBER FOR **WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION***

Shadow Assistant Minister for Police & Corrections

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Trung Luu MP
LIBERAL MEMBER FOR WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

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LIBERAL VICTORIA

I have cancer
Navigating a broken system makes it worse

OPINION

By Tarquam McKenna

I have cancer.

Those three words change the way you look at risk. They change the meaning of waiting for a scan. They change how you think about time. And they certainly change how you react when asbestos-containing material is confirmed at building works close to your home.

I have lived with serious cancer for several years. I have undergone treatment and surgery and continue to live with the uncertainty familiar to many people with cancer. So when concerns arose about asbestos during building work near my West Footscray home, I wanted answers to some simple questions: What happened? Was there any risk that I had been exposed? Was I safe?

Instead, I found myself navigating a regulatory maze.

My attempts to understand what had happened involved Maribyrnong City Council, the Victorian Building Authority, WorkSafe Victoria, and the Environment Protection Authority. I also contacted local elected representatives seeking help to understand where responsibility lay and how my concerns could be resolved.

Each body has its own legitimate role and statutory responsibilities. I am not suggesting that any individual agency failed to perform that role. My concern is almost the opposite: a system can have multiple agencies each performing its particular function and still fail the citizen who needs one clear, coordinated answer.

There was certainly no shortage of regulation. There were jurisdictions, procedures, complaint mechanisms, websites, telephone numbers, and explanations about where one agency's responsibility ended and another's began.

But I was the person left trying to join the pieces together.

For me, this was not an academic exercise in public administration. I was already living with cancer and trying to establish whether a known carcinogenic hazard near my home had been properly managed. I found the process exhausting and, too often, I did not feel adequately heard.

I am a retired university professor. English is my first language. I spent much of my working life inside large institutions. I know how to research, write formal correspondence, keep records and persist.

If I found this difficult, what happens to somebody who cannot do those things?

What happens to an older resident with limited digital skills, a recent migrant with limited English, someone with a disability, a person working two jobs, or somebody already overwhelmed by illness? In Melbourne's west, one of Australia's most culturally and linguistically diverse communities, these are not theoretical questions.

There is also a cost we rarely count. Taxpayers fund regulators, departments, complaint systems, and administrative processes. Citizens then contribute something more: unpaid hours spent researching, telephoning, emailing, repeating their story and trying to determine which authority can actually help.

> I found myself navigating a regulatory maze

We have, in effect, shifted part of the work of coordinating government onto the people seeking government's help.

Australia does not need weaker asbestos protection. Asbestos is precisely the kind of danger that demands strong regulation. But strong regulation should also mean clear responsibility, coordination and a system ordinary people can understand.

The same principle applies to cancer care. Governments now invest heavily in cancer nursing and navigation because they recognise how difficult complex systems can be for patients. Navigation services are valuable, but their very existence raises a harder question: why do we keep designing systems that require sick and vulnerable people to become expert navigators?

Good regulation should not be measured by the number of rules, agencies or complaint mechanisms we create. It should be measured by whether people are protected and whether the system works for the person who needs it.

The answer is not less protection. It is better regulation, clearer accountability, and agencies that work together so citizens do not have to join the pieces themselves.

Cancer has already taken enough of my time.

I should not have to spend more of it navigating four government agencies to find out whether I am safe in my own home.

Greater Western Water

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Tarneit Community Learning Centre	Tarneit	Tue 8 September	11am – 3pm
Flemington Library	Flemington	Wed 9 September	11am – 3pm
Avondale Heights Library & Learning Centre	Avondale Heights	Mon 14 September	11am – 3pm
Cooper St Community Centre	Essendon	Thu 17 September	11am – 3pm
Bowes Ave Community Centre	Airport West	Mon 21 September	11am – 3pm
Wyndham Community & Education Centre	Werribee	Thu 24 September	11am - 3pm
Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services	Melton	Mon 28 September	11am – 3pm
Greater Western Water office	Footscray	Weekdays	9am – 5pm

Housing crisis: homeless rates in the West highest in Australia

By Lev Burke
RMIT journalism intern

Advocacy group LeadWest says outreach services for the homeless are struggling to keep up with growing demand. New data from the group shows the homeless rate in Melbourne's west is approximately 50 percent higher than that of the national average.

LeadWest is an advocacy alliance between the Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham municipalities. Its data shows 15,025 people sought homelessness assistance in 2024-25.

Analysis of the data found that the region's rapid population growth, lack of affordable housing, and unmet demand for social housing has exacerbated the pressure on homeless services which are already overextended and underfunded.

LeadWest Chair and Maribyrnong City Councillor, Susan Yengi says local councils are having to take the lead in managing homelessness in the West, in spite of not having dedicated funding to manage the issue.

"Councils are increasingly becoming frontline responders, helping people experiencing homelessness in parks, libraries, community centres and public spaces, despite not being funded or formally recognised for this role," she said in a media release.

"Melbourne's west is now recording the highest demand for homelessness services in Australia. That should be a wake-up call for governments at every level."

LeadWest has called on the state government to provide more support for communities in Melbourne's west.

The organisation listed the following requests:

- Increased investment in public and community housing appropriate to local needs to boost housing supply and create sustainable pathways out of homelessness.
- Funding assertive outreach services across all municipalities in Melbourne's west to better support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Supporting integrated local service coordination across housing, health, mental health, alcohol and other drug, and family violence systems.
- Investing in improved local homelessness data to better understand need, inform planning and support evidence-based responses.

Peter McGrath, the Salvation Army's Homelessness State Manager Victoria, shares a similar sentiment. "With the demand in our entry point services, we are finding that we are having to turn away more people because we don't have the resources to assist," says McGrath.

McGrath says the government must continue to invest in affordable social and community housing and agrees that local community and specialised services need to work collaboratively in order to best help those in need.

"Obviously we are a homelessness service and we will work with people who may have a mental health issue," he says. "But what we want to do is make sure that we can openly work together with health services and with council services so we all bring and invest each of our resources so we can create a real holistic solution."

Data from Australian demography company, Informed Decisions shows that the population in Melbourne's west reached one million in 2026 and is forecast to reach 1.5 million, putting more strain on the housing market and homelessness services.

ABS data shows that Victoria has the highest rate of people seeking homelessness services in the nation, with Melbourne's west having the highest. Just under 5,000 people are known to be homeless with another 9,000 at risk of homelessness in the West. Only around two percent of those experiencing homelessness sleep rough, meaning most homelessness tends to be invisible.

With the upcoming state election, it will be important that those seeking a spot in parliament have a plan to address the growing issue of homelessness through funding of services and housing affordability and supply.

Location	Homeless individuals (Census 2021)	Individuals seeking homeless services	Rates of homelessness per 10,000
Australia	122,000	289,000	106
Victoria	30,660	105,000	151
Melbourne's west	4,489	15,023	157

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- 80% of Australians support removing criminal penalties for personal cannabis use.

Our proposal aimed to break decades of political inaction, as our state approaches its 100th anniversary of cannabis prohibition.

It's clear that the community is way ahead, and our politicians are out of touch.

Learn more

DAVID ETTERSHANK MP
Member for Western Metropolitan Region
LEGALISE CANNABIS VICTORIA
(03) 9317 5900 | davidettershank.com.au

JESS MARSH
INDEPENDENT *for* FOOTSCRAY

HELLO, I'M JESS

Human rights lawyer. Climate campaigner. Mum of three. Proud Inner West local.

I love living here. Footscray and the Inner West is diverse, creative, occasionally chaotic, and fiercely community-minded - a place built by workers, migrants, small businesses and generations of families who have made their home here.

But our community has been taken for granted as a safe seat for far too long.

We have carried this city's industry and its pollution for generations. We have lived with trucks rumbling past our homes while our kids have some of the highest asthma rates in the state. We have fought for cleaner air and **still we are being ignored in favour of party politics and vested interests.**

And now we are witnessing another wave of enormous industrial development with hyperscale AI data centres expanding rapidly close to our homes, schools and childcare centres.

Whether it is underfunded schools, a lack of vision for the old Footscray Hospital site, level crossing removal plans in that don't work for our village, families living paycheck to paycheck, or flood survivors in Maribyrnong who have been forgotten and left behind- **our community deserves better.**

We are fed up, and we are right to be. This is not good enough. We want decisions about the future of the Inner West to be made with us, not done to us. **It's our community, our voice.**

My work has taken me from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre in Footscray, to refugee camps in Ethiopia and Southeast Asia, to the halls of the Victorian Government, and now I am ready to step up and fight for a better future for Footscray.

I am running as a community independent candidate in this year's Victorian election for the Seat of Footscray. Not because I think politicians have all the answers. But because I think communities often do.

My approach is simple: Evidence-based, community-led, and guided by the question – Is this actually in the public interest?

If anything I have said here resonates with you, and you would like to volunteer, display a sign, join an event, or stay up to date with the campaign, I would love to hear from you. Head to **Jessmarsh.com.au** to find out more.

LEARN MORE

Authorised by J. Marsh, Suite 201/175b Stephen St, Yarraville Vic 3013

Mixed reactions for planned Wool Store expansion in West Footscray

By Hannah Vandenbogaerde

A new planning application for West Footscray's Wool Store has sparked debate across Melbourne's west.

Following the expiry of its previous permit, music and events company Untitled Group has submitted a proposal seeking to increase both the size and number of events held at the venue, alongside a reduction in parking.

"The Wool Store has been a local landmark for generations, but has sat unused for years. Together with Creative Victoria, we're excited to be bringing the precinct back to life as an arts, music and cultural hub, and a place West Footscray can be proud of", says Pete Sofo, Director of Festivals and Major Events at Untitled.

Some residents have welcomed the initiative with open arms. Local Colette Deschamps says she supports the opening of any event space, because they will make the west more liveable.

"I think it is a great idea. I think more entertainment venues of a decent size anywhere in a city is great, but in the West it is fantastic. It will give us access to amazing events."

Another local, Jacqui Hannon has mixed feelings. While she says she's not been bothered by events in past years she does have concerns about parking.

"We do not actually really hear the music much at all when they are on. So for us, that is not really an issue," says Ms Hannon.

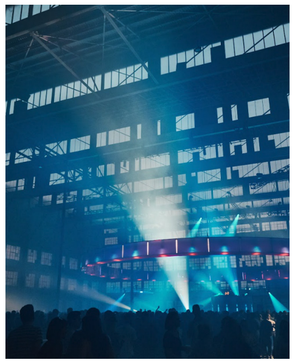
However, she says that reduced parking and bad traffic management has often led to congestion on their streets.

"The residents had nowhere to park. And it was one particular occasion, it was impossible to drive down the street, there was just nowhere to pull in, or it was very difficult for us to get in and out of the driveways for those who live near the Wool Store."

The new proposal is seeking 34 car spaces during major events and 58 spaces during minor events, resulting in a projected shortfall of 1,275 parking spaces for major events and 92 car spaces for minor events.

With the goal of increasing their patronage from 5000 to 8500 for major events, local Bruce Smith has also expressed concerns about the heightened risk of disturbance after events.

He says he does not believe a sign will be adequate 'for managing the dispersal of up to 8500 people at night.'



Ms Hannon is a little more optimistic. She says Untitled has improved traffic management for their most recent events and is hoping the company will continue to keep residents in mind.

However, she also says she would like some more forward planning and consultation about any changes.

"There has to be a bit of consideration put towards the narrow streets, there is a lot of construction in our area. There is a major data centre being built," she says. "So we are all pretty hypersensitive to traffic and road closures."

"As long as the organisers communicate with the actual local community, we can sort of live all harmoniously side by side."

Mr. Sofo says they are communicating with Council about establishing 'community consultation' nights to ensure the project is delivering to community expectations.

Bruce Smith however is not confident about the community consultation process. He says often "have to compare multiple reports and try to determine which version is current or which statements take priority."

"For an ongoing entertainment venue of this scale, residents should not have to reconstruct the proposal themselves from documents that appear incomplete, unclear or inconsistent."

One of the aspects that is creating a lot of confusion for residents is the company's definition of 'minor events'.

The proposal states there is no annual cap on these events and could involve up to 1000 patrons. Council has recommended more clarification which the Untitled Group has ejected.

Mr Smith says the lack of information is concerning.

"An unlimited number of events involving up to 1000 people should not be treated as insignificant. Clear and enforceable limits are required."

Furthermore, he says he is worried about the application of noise limits and if there will be enough effort to reduce noise as far as reasonably practicable.

"One of the most serious concerns with this application is that it appears to be structured and assessed in a way that circumvents the usual EPA Noise requirements applying to permanent entertainment venues."

Wool Store's noise management plan states that EPA limits for outdoor events should be applied to all stage areas within the venue as that will allow for practical noise monitoring.

An EPA spokesperson has confirmed that outdoor entertainment venues must obtain event permits from the EPA if those events meet certain criteria.

"Whether the Wool Store is considered an indoor or outdoor entertainment venue will depend on the nature of individual events held at the location."

Despite Council recommending an independent review, this has also been rejected by Untitled.

At the time of writing Maribyrnong City Council has stated it will not provide any comment at this stage.

To read the full story, including a response from the Department of Transport and Planning, head to thewestsider.com.au

The heart of Sunshine still beats but it no longer feels the same

By Minh Le
RMIT journalism student

Sunshine's Vietnamese community once saw Hampshire Road as simply part of everyday life. That all changed following the death of local shopkeeper Van Viet Truong.

On July 25 Mr Truong was allegedly bashed when he tried to stop a group of teenagers suspected of stealing clothes from a neighbouring store. He died in hospital a few days later.

Mr Truong, 60, ran his grocery shop in Sunshine for more than 30 years. His long connection to the area meant many people knew him.

Since his death Sunshine's streets have become difficult for many people to walk through.

For Ngoc Nguyen, who has lived in Sunshine for five years, the streets have not physically changed. But the way she experiences them has.

"The street looks exactly the same," she says. "The shops are still there, people are still walking around, the buses still come. But it doesn't feel the same."

Nguyen says she now notices things she did not think about before.

"Before, you could walk past a shop without thinking about whether the person inside was safe. Now sometimes you notice things you never noticed before."

For Ha Tran, a Vietnamese international student who lives in Sunshine, Mr Truong's shop was more than a place to buy groceries.

"He was such a friendly and cheerful person. I often went to his shop because it gave me a feeling of home – hearing Vietnamese, seeing familiar things."

Tran says his death is difficult to imagine because Mr Truong was an important part of everyday life in the area.

"You never imagine that someone you see everyday could suddenly be gone."

But, as Ngoc Nguyen puts it, "a familiar place can become unfamiliar without changing at all."

In response to Mr Truong's death the community held a rally on Sunday, August 9. People came together to call for safer communities, stronger laws, and more police presence in Sunshine.

Nguyen Bao Chau, who organised the rally through the Vietnamese Mothers in Australia Community, says the rally began as a small idea.

She first asked other Vietnamese mothers why no one was speaking about what had happened. They encouraged her to organise something, and the idea grew as more people became involved.

Chau says she wanted to bring people together so that local councillors could hear the concerns of the Vietnamese community and understand how the incident has affected people in the area.

> He was such a friendly and cheerful person. I often went to his shop because it gave me a feeling of home.

Chau says people who knew Mr Truong are still affected and that the wife of the shop owner who Mr Truong had gone to help has been especially shocked by the incident.

The Sunshine Business Association has also raised concerns about the impact of safety issues on local businesses.

It says businesses have reported robberies, vandalism, fewer customers and shorter trading hours because of safety fears.

The shops are still there. The buses still come and go. People still walk along Hampshire Road, but many do so with heavier hearts than before knowing that the community feels less safe than before.

Half a million trees planted to help try and cool the west

By Lev Burke
RMIT journalism intern

A major milestone was reached last month as the More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West program planted its 500,000th tree.

Around 350 volunteers took part in the annual event at Victoria University's Werribee campus, where they managed to plant 2,500 trees.

The event has taken place over the past several years and VU has been able to celebrate its own milestone: 20,000 trees planted on its campus alone.

The tree planting program is part of a larger effort by multiple organisations to help combat climate change and create a greener environment in Melbourne's western suburbs - a region known to be an urban heat island due to its lack of tree canopy.

"Since 2021, the More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West program has been transforming streets, parks and schoolyards across Melbourne's western suburbs, with 500,000 more trees now providing shade, cleaner air and cooler neighbourhoods for communities to enjoy for generations to come," explains Hamish Brooks, a spokesperson for the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

"Trees have been established in parks and reserves, along roads and shared user paths, and throughout residential and industrial areas to help reduce urban heat, improve amenity and support biodiversity".

The Victorian Government launched the programme in 2021 with the aim of hitting the half-a-million mark by 2026 and has achieved this target with the help of VU, led by Fatih Tuncer, the VU in the Community Manager.

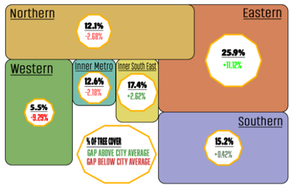
Mr Tuncer says the program has been successful and has made a difference to the VU campus. He says the space at the Werribee Campus where 20,00 trees have been planted was previously barren land. "Now you've got trees there, and the most beautiful thing about it is as soon as you head into that space you hear the birds chirping, you hear the native wildlife that is around."

"Victoria University is unique in that we are very invested in the community... When we saw this initiative, it was quite important for us because we wanted to contribute to this space," says Mr Tuncer.

Mr Tuncer says the community came together for the milestone planting event creating a festive atmosphere.

"It's great that so many people signed up to it and we didn't really even have to push hard with the promotion of the event," Mr Tuncer says. "People knew it was coming up, they wanted to be part of it... The relationships that you build out there when you are planting together are very different."

Percentage of tree coverage by area in Melbourne



Source: Hurley et al. for DELWP, 2019

2026 will be the final year of the initiative, but Mr Tuncer says that VU will still be on the lookout for opportunities to connect the community and improve the environment in the West.

"It's something we would love to explore. The programme has come to an end. But if we do find other opportunities we will [partake]".

According to 2018 data from RMIT and the Department of Transport and Planning Melbourne's west has the lowest tree coverage in the city with only 5.5% canopy. That's compared to 12.1% in the north, up to 15.2% in the south and a leafy 25.9% in the east.

This leads to an urban heat island in the West: hot days are going to be even hotter, as there is little to protect roads and buildings from the heat.

"One main issue is the urban heat island effect where roads, buildings and other hard surfaces absorb and retain heat, whereas when you have a tree canopy it's a very different story," says Mr Tuncer.

Tree planting initiatives will go some way to combat the problem, but there is still a lot of work to be done. The next step for DEECA is to commission another Melbourne-wide survey of tree canopy to assess the change since 2018.

Public still in the dark over details of the WSLSC redevelopment

By Jade Nacionales
RMIT journalism graduate

The redevelopment of Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club will go ahead after five years of planning and contention within the Williamstown community.

Local Labor MP Melissa Horne has confirmed that plans have been signed off by the Minister for Planning Sonya Kilkenny, clearing the way for design work led by Hobsons Bay City Council to begin, though key details of the final design remain unclear.

"I'm thrilled to have announced that the redevelopment plans for Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club have been approved," said Horne in a statement to The Westsider.

"The project team will now complete the detailed design phase, which will refine technical and operational elements of the approved redevelopment before commencing procurement for construction," said a spokesperson in a media release from the Hobsons Bay City Council.

However the following list of questions put to both Horne and Kilkenny remain unanswered:

What are the details of the conditions that the State Government has placed on this planning permit? Will the pool be upgraded? Will the public amenities be improved? Will the building be as tall or bulky as the previous submitted plans? Will public land be acquired for the new building? Will it contravene council's heritage advice or guidelines? Will the community be given the opportunity to comment on the new plans? How substantial are the changes? Are they simply cosmetic or are they more substantial?

Documents previously obtained by The Westsider under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act reveal the Council pushed the proposal forward despite repeated warnings from its own heritage adviser that the plans should not proceed in their current form.

The FOI documents show that on January 19 this year, the Council's long-time heritage adviser said the redevelopment 'does not meet heritage policy or guidelines'.

Less than three months later, on or before April 13, the Council submitted the same proposal to the State Government for approval.

The advice echoes warnings given to the Council in 2022, 2024 and 2025, all stating that none of the historic 1935 clubrooms should be demolished.

The last plan seen by the public involves partially demolishing the 1935 clubrooms and constructing a two-storey building behind them. The heritage report describes the addition as 'too visually dominant', with a roofline exceeding 11 metres – taller than the clubhouse's historic tower – and a footprint that 'overwhelms' the remaining heritage structure.

The report also warns of 'detrimental impacts' on sightlines within the heritage precinct, including a proposed storage building that would block views of the clubhouse from the Esplanade.

So far the State Labor Government and Hobsons Bay Council combined have committed close to $16 million for the project. However Matthew Irving, HBCC Director Infrastructure and City Services has previously said that the final cost of the project will not be known until the full procurement process is facilitated.

OPINION

Maribyrnong's Creative West – for $148 million, build something unmistakably Footscray

By Bryce Ives

Maribyrnong Council is proposing to spend $148 million on Creative West: a new library, public space and 500-plus-seat performing arts centre in central Footscray.

I am not opposed to that kind of investment. In fact, I think Footscray should be making a bigger cultural bet than it does now. But for $148 million, surely the question is not simply whether Creative West is better than the ageing library and car park it would replace. Of course it is. The real question is whether this is the best thing Footscray could possibly do with once-in-a-generation public money.

Council is making a much bigger case for Creative West than simply replacing the library. It says the project will help revitalise central Footscray, attract visitors and investment, and strengthen the day-and-night economy. If those benefits are central to justifying a $148 million investment, Council should be able to demonstrate why it believes this particular project will deliver them.

I would encourage councilors to spend an afternoon at the Clocktower Centre in Moonee Ponds, the Wyndham Cultural Centre in Werribee, and the Darebin Arts Centre in Preston. They are all useful civic assets. But then walk around the surrounding streets and ask whether those buildings transformed the neighborhoods around them, and importantly, talk to local artists and organisations and ask how important these facilities are in supporting their ambition and practice.

For years, cities chased the so-called 'Bilbao effect', hoping a major cultural building might trigger tourism, investment and renewal. But Bilbao was never just the Guggenheim. The museum sat inside a much larger transformation involving transport, public space, economic restructuring, and sustained investment. A cultural building can be part of a regeneration project, but it is not, by itself, a regeneration strategy. The problem in Footscray is not an absence of culture. It is how to build on the extraordinary culture that is already here.

There is another reason to be cautious. Bent Flyvbjerg's work on major infrastructure has documented how easily optimism bias takes hold: costs and risks are underestimated and benefits overstated. Once a large project develops momentum, the question can slowly change from 'is this the best intervention?' to 'how do we get this built?'

I wonder if Creative West is getting close to that point.

Council says the purpose of its latest consultation was "not to start again, but to check that the project remains on the right track". For a project expected to cost around $148 million, I think Council should be willing to go back to first principles. That doesn't mean discarding the work already done. It means going back to the problem and asking whether the proposed solution is still the best answer.

Because Footscray is not starting from a cultural deficit. Quite the opposite. It is already here, in Footscray Community Arts, Snuff Puppets, Women's Circus, 100 Story Building, L2R Dance, Trocadero Projects and Five Walls, alongside the musicians, artists, studios, galleries and creative businesses scattered through the suburb. An earlier Council public art strategy talked about Footscray's "edge condition," and I think that instinct was right.

Footscray has something so many places have spent decades trying to manufacture: a genuine cultural character and heartbeat.

So why spend generational money making it more like every other municipality or place?

There is a strong case for a new Footscray Library. There is a strong case for better public space and a town park. But neither automatically proves the case for a 500-plus-seat theatre, and that component should stand on its own.

Show the demand. How many nights a year will it operate? Who will use it? Where will audiences come from? What will they spend in Footscray? What will the annual operating subsidy be, and how much of that will actually go to artists? Which artists or producers are currently unable to present work because a venue of this size does not exist? Can local community groups afford to hire it?

> Footscray has something so many places have spent decades trying to manufacture: a genuine cultural character and heartbeat.

And then show us the opportunity cost.

Take the $148 million capital cost and add what Council expects to spend operating, maintaining, and renewing the facility over the next 30 years. Give that financial envelope to another team and ask them to come up with the best possible cultural, social, and economic investment for central Footscray. No requirement for one big building. No assumption that a theatre and a library are part of the answer.

Maybe Creative West still wins, and if so, good. But make sure it is genuinely tested.

Because maybe the alternative is a brilliant library and town park, with serious investment left for Nicholson Street, the Mall, and public space. Maybe the Council acquires strategic buildings and protects affordable space for artists and creative businesses. Maybe it makes Footscray Community Arts a genuine partner or the "custodian" of the precinct's future, rather than building a parallel council-run cultural institution within a kilometre. Maybe it backs existing organisations, activates empty shopfronts, invests in music and nightlife, commissions ambitious public art, and makes it easier for people with good ideas to do interesting things here.

Or perhaps Footscray makes an entirely bolder cultural bet: an international centre for street art and urban culture, or a multicultural arts precinct built around the extraordinary communities of Melbourne's west. Not a municipal theatre with a diverse program bolted onto it, but an institution conceived from the beginning around the actual cultural life of this place, with international ambition and aiming to be genuinely world-class.

These are only ideas. There will be better ones. Whatever Council builds with $148 million should respond to what is already distinctive about Footscray, rather than importing a generic municipal model.

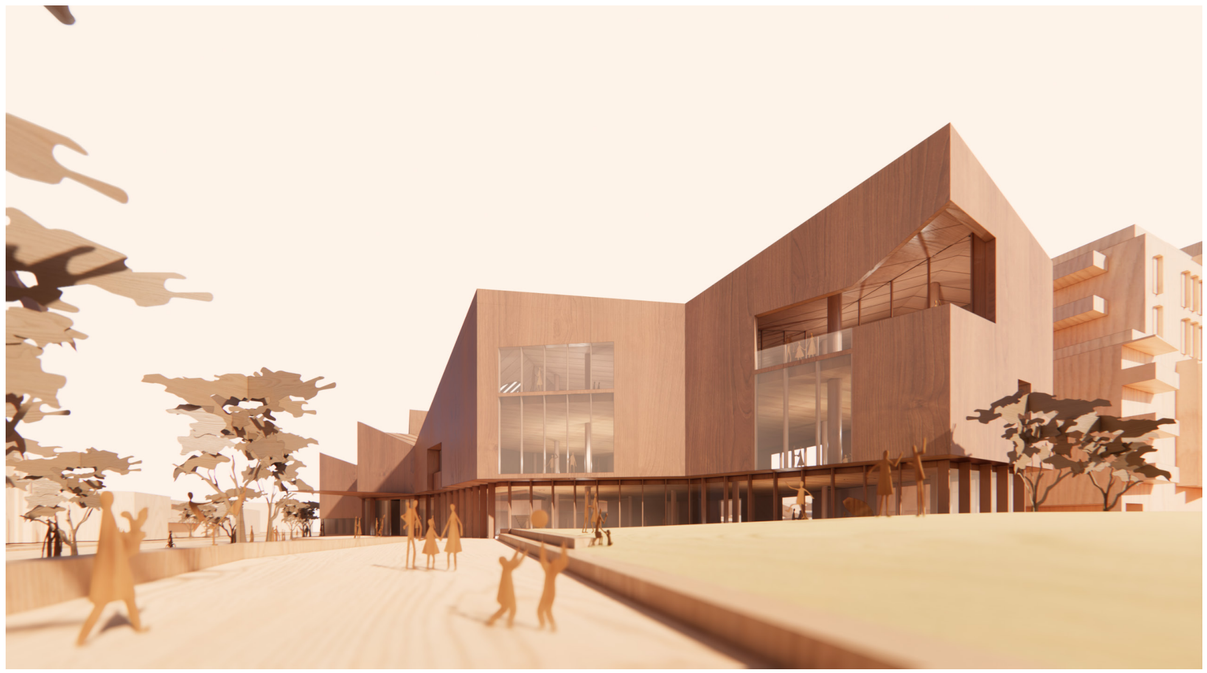
It should have an edge. It should take some risks. It should build on the ecology already here rather than gathering culture up and putting it inside a council building.

Footscray should not come out of once-in-a-generation investment with a perfectly respectable municipal arts centre that could just as easily have been built in Werribee, Moonee Ponds, or Preston, programming the latest ABBA touring show.

We should be more ambitious.

In 20 years, we should be able to look back and say we created something unmistakably Footscray—something other cities or councils wish they had thought of first.

Bryce Ives is the Principal of YoBou Pty Ltd and is currently a strategic advisor to Regional Arts Australia, The Push, Music Victoria, and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, and has been a Festival Director and Artistic Director in Australia and globally.



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Visionary toastmaster

Dick Wilkie

By Helen McKenzie-Fairlie

My local hero is an ordinary man with an extraordinary vision.

80-year-old, Dick Wilke, is the President of Aerospeakers Toastmasters Club Laverton. His vision is to see members communicate openly, honestly and from the heart.

The son of a country school teacher, he inherited a love of language that along with management workforce experience prepared him for full-time retirement, and involvement in three Toastmasters clubs.

Dick's heart is for the younger, tech savvy generation, whose appreciation and grasp of language has yet to be refined in the furnace of fire.

'Vision with action can change the world' These words of American author Joel Barker define Dick's pragmatic approach to transforming developing speakers into exceptional communicators. He envisages the club as a team with a common goal to see every other member become a confident communicator, where members are encouraged to further this goal.

Because according to Dick, it's only when we help others to achieve their goals that we also, without realising it, achieve our own goals.

For Dick, Aerospeakers Presidency offers an amazing opportunity to achieve something of value that our younger members can learn and share with all those whom they encounter throughout their life journey.

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Looking at the ownership of childcare in Melbourne's west

By Bridget Sheehan

With widespread fear and concern about childcare safety across Australia, every aspect of the system is being looked at to see what changes are needed to guarantee the safety of children.

How childcare is funded, who owns centres, and where centres are located are all part of this.

"We need to examine the fundamentals of the sector to ask why it may be more vulnerable to serious failures than we might expect," explains Professor Peter Hurley, a leading national policy expert in education and Director at Victoria University's Mitchell Institute.

In 2020 and 2024 the Mitchell Institute conducted extensive research into childcare access in Australia, producing a national study that showed childcare access in every postcode in the country, highlighting childcare 'deserts' (where more than three pre-school children vie for a single childcare place), and childcare 'oases' (where there is an oversupply of childcare places per child). The 2024 study also compared childcare access in the UK, Norway, Sweden and France.

This year Professor Hurley and team went further in their analysis, looking at nationwide growth in places, ownership, churn, and adherence to quality standards in childcare data from 2013 to 2025.

A market-based system dominated by for-profit providers

Early childhood education and care is managed very differently to other parts of the education environment.

"Unlike schools, governments are much less involved in the operation of childcare centres," Professor Hurley explains.

One reason for this is the sector's rapid growth.

"Early childhood education and care looked very different 30 years ago. There were very few places available. This lack of access to early learning disproportionately impacted women, especially those who wanted to return to the workforce. Over the past three decades, Federal Governments have looked at different models to increase supply of childcare," Professor Hurley says.

"In the drive to increase access for more families – and keep costs down – Australia has taken a market-based approach to provision."

Regulatory bodies exist to make sure providers meet minimum requirements, such as child-to-educator ratios, but many providers are also incentivised by cost-cutting.

"At its core, it is a system that rewards those who can produce the service (an hour of early learning) in the most 'efficient' way possible."

"These approaches bake-in the deficiencies of low-pay and high turnover and put enormous strain on the sector. They end up rewarding those providers who can produce an hour of care in the cheapest way possible while meeting the minimum standard."

How Melbourne's west compares to national averages

Melbourne's west has experienced a large growth in childcare services between 2013 to the end of 2025.

"The number of childcare places has grown from 12,800 to 31,800 (around 150 percent). This is much higher than the national rate of growth over the same period, at 80 percent."

"Like the national trend, it is private for-profit providers who have been responsible for almost all of this growth. Private for-profit providers make up 80 percent of all childcare places in Melbourne's west compared to 75 percent nationally."

"Changes in the provider responsible for services, which we use to describe 'churn' in ownership, is less in the West of Melbourne compared to nationally.

"About 26 percent of long-day care centres in the west of Melbourne have changed hands since 2013, compared to about 32 percent nationally.

"This may be attributable to the high rates of growth in Melbourne's west, so there has been less time for services to change hands compared to the rest of Australia."

Where to from here?

Professor Hurley explains that the analysis highlights some of the consequences of past decisions and some of the difficulties that lie ahead.

"Australia has created a very effective system that has expanded the supply of childcare, at a relatively low cost. But these conditions are not always the best when it comes to guaranteeing safety."

Researchers of the West making a global impact

Victoria University is one of our state's most valued tertiary educational institutions. We think it's important to know the critical research that takes place right here in the western suburbs so each month we put the spotlight on local analysis of international significance.

"One of the great things about the sector is the dedicated workforce. What we need to do is make the conditions right for early childhood educators to do their job properly. That will mean more money, but it is absolutely worth the investment."

If you're considering childcare options for your child, Professor Hurley recommends looking up quality ratings for services on startingblocks.gov.au.

"This can give a general overview. It is one piece in a big puzzle that can help make parents make the decision that is best for them," he says.

Quilt project spotlights plight of Maribyrnong River and its 'unseen creatures'

By Delia Paul
PhD

Stitchers from all over the Maribyrnong River catchment have made embroidered patches featuring micro-invertebrates — tiny freshwater creatures — to form a triptych of quilts highlighting the need for better care of our rivers.

The project draws attention to aquatic health threats from pollution, climate change, over-allocation of freshwater, and emerging impacts from hyperscale data centres.

The quilt project is the brainchild of artist-educator Angela Clarke, co-executive officer at the Maribyrnong River and Waterways Association (MRWA). "Back in 2024, we had a stall at the Lancefield Agricultural Show, where we displayed sculptures of micro-invertebrates made by Jos van den Berg. People were fascinated," she recalls.

"At the same time, we were fascinated by the beautiful quilt work depicting nature in the art show. We put these two fascinations together and the idea of a community quilt was born."

MRWA is a community-based organisation advocating for the health of rivers and creeks in the Maribyrnong River catchment. The quilt project, says Clarke, has been a way for people all over the catchment to express care for our waterways.

"We knew from experience that arts-based political projects can be very powerful," says Clarke. "So, we took this project across the catchment and the idea took hold."

Working with embroiderers and guided by Seabreeze Quilters, Clarke has developed embroidery kits and patterns for eight different micro-invertebrates. The biologically accurate representations were inspired by the work of scientist Dr Robert Walsh, whose website, Australian Waterlife, depicts many micro-invertebrate species.

The quilt's centrepiece is an embroidered map of the catchment, crafted by expert quilter Maxine West.

The decision to feature micro-invertebrates, usually only visible through a microscope, may seem quirky, but is grounded in science. Micro-invertebrates live in rivers, lakes and wetlands. They are a food source for fish and other aquatic animals, and perform important ecosystem functions, for example, by eating decomposing plant matter.

Environmental conditions such as salinity, turbidity, and pesticide contamination can diminish their populations. As a basic link in the food web, micro-invertebrates are a vital sign of river health.

Clarke initiated the project through a Maribyrnong U3A workshop series and then took the project on the road throughout the catchment. More than 200 people have taken part in community stitching events.

Embroidered patches were contributed from Maribyrnong, Altona, Niddrie, Essendon, Sunbury, Gisborne, Bolinda, Romsey, Lancefield and further afield. Groups from the Native Fish Association, Greater Western Water, RMIT University, and local councils too have participated.

At community stitching events, participants were invited to reflect on a simple but profound question: "What would it mean to bring ourselves back into good relations with water?"

"Guided by First Nations leaders, we saw conversations unfold about water, belonging and care," says Clarke. "This is happening at a time when the Maribyrnong River is under increasing pressure. The river is one of Victoria's most flow-stressed waterways."

In the lead-up to the Victorian State election in November, MRWA is calling on the State Government and its Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to deliver on long-standing promises to safeguard the Maribyrnong.

Since 2006, DEECA's Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy has promised the Maribyrnong an environmental entitlement allocating 7 gigalitres of water annually, but this target has never been met, Clarke explains.

MRWA is asking the new government to deliver on promises, return water to the creeks and streams, and make sure that data centres currently being built use only recycled water.

"This quilt alone cannot restore a river," says Clarke. "But perhaps it can restore something equally important: our capacity to notice, to care, and to act together."

Made from 138 individual submissions, the Unseen Creatures quilt triptych can be viewed from September 9-12 at the Victorian Quilters Showcase taking place at the Craft & Quilt Fair Melbourne Exhibition Centre, South Wharf, Melbourne. After that, the quilt will be exhibited in libraries, community spaces and local festivals across the catchment.

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QILT Employer Satisfaction Survey 2025
Learn more
CRICOS No. 00124K (Melbourne), 02475D (Sydney and Brisbane), RTO 3113, TEQSA No. PRV12152, Provider Category: Australian University. MH-1473

When Altona joined the Age of the Electric Railways: 1926–2026

By Graeme Reilly
Altona Laverton Historical Society

It was one hundred years ago on 2 October 1926 that Altona's first electrified rail service commenced operations, replacing steam locomotives and joining this rail line to Melbourne's great electric railway system.

Melbourne led the way in Australia when electric trains began between Essendon and Sandringham stations on 28 May 1919 and this was expanded to cover the broader suburban area by 1923. Sydney followed suit seven years later when its first electric train ran, just seven months prior to the electrification of the Altona line.

The Victorian Railways commenced planning for the suburban railway electrification in the 1910's but with the start of the Great War in 1914 implementation of their plan slowed up significantly.

Given that the Williamstown Racecourse branch line was electrified in August 1920, why did it take so long to electrify the remainder of this line to Altona? After all, it was only another four-kilometres on to both Seaholme and then Altona.

Williamstown Racecourse branch was part of the Victorian Railways suburban system, but the line beyond the racecourse, to Altona had originated as a private railway associated with the land development and later coal mining use. The original rail line of 1888 only operated for a few years when lack of use forced its closure.

It was leased by the Victorian Railways in 1906 to store race trains. Sometime between 1911 and 1919 the line reopened for goods trains with a siding built from Altona Beach to the Melbourne and Altona Colliery Company mine near today's Harrington Square.

From November 1917, the Victorian Railways worked on the line on behalf of the then owners, Altona Beach Estates Limited, but to a relocated Altona Beach station at Pier Street. The original Altona Beach Station was situated west of Grieve Parade, formerly Lily Street.

Beginning on 1 December 1917 a rail service of ten trains ran on weekdays and Saturday with additional workmen's trains run in the morning and evening. There were five trains operating on a Sunday. The service was operated by the Railways department under a guarantee from the Altona Bay Estates Company.

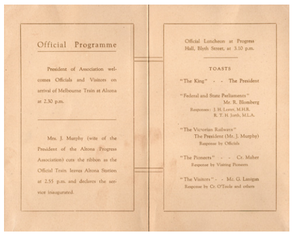
The Victorian Railways took control of the line and station on 1 October 1924 when the company owed the railways some £7,289 through their guarantee against operating losses. Two years later electric trains commenced operation on 2 October 1926. Work to electrify the line commenced in April 1926 and was completed just six months later.

There was a large crowd on the day of the opening, taking up all the space on the station platform, Pier Street, and on the south and north side of the track in front of the train. The station and streets were decorated with flags and posters, and the town took on the appearance of a festival.

The festivities started upon the arrival of the 2 pm train from Flinders Street and the dignitaries onboard were welcomed by the members of the Altona Progress Association, led by their president, John Murphy. The association, and leading residents had petitioned hard for the reinstatement of a train service and now Altona was connected to the electrified suburban rail network.

At 2.55 pm, Mrs Nellie Murphy, the wife of John Murphy, leaned from the train drivers window and cut the dividing ribbon with a pair of scissors presented by Mr Ralph Hjorth, M.L.A., and declared the service inaugurated. These scissors remain a central part of our collection at the Altona Laverton Historical Society.

At the time of electrification there were only two stations on this line, Seaholme and Altona Beach, with the name of the latter station's name being shortened to Altona in 1938, and Williamstown Racecourse station only being used on race days.


Official Programme

President of Association welcomes Officials and Visitors on arrival of Melbourne Train at Altona at 2.30 p.m.

Mrs. J. Murphy (wife of the President of the Altona Progress Association) cuts the ribbon as the Official Train leaves Altona Station at 2.55 p.m. and declares the service inaugurated.

Official Luncheon at Progress Hall, Hoth Street, at 3.10 p.m.

TOASTS

"The King" ... The President

"Federal and State Parliaments" ... Mr. R. Blomberg
Responses: J. M. Lawe, M.H.R.; R. T. H. Jorth, M.L.A.

"The Victorian Railways" ... The President (Mr. J. Murphy)
Response by Officials

"The Pioneers" ... Cr. Maher
Response by Verna Pioneer.

"The Visitors" ... Mr. G. Lavigne.
Response by Cr. O'Toole and others.

The historic building housing Footscray's history

By Yvette Campitelli-Slee

Tucked away on Napier St in Footscray is Ercildoune, a heritage building which is owned by and is home to the Footscray Historical Society. It holds a remarkable collection of local history that many residents may not realise exists.

Ahead of Ercildoune's 150th anniversary later this year, The Westsider was invited inside the former National Bank of Australasia building to discover how the Footscray Historical Society preserves the stories that have shaped the area.

The Society was first formed in 1968 following a meeting of like-minded residents who recognised the need to protect Footscray's heritage at a time when many historic buildings were under threat.

Since that time, the Society has collated thousands of historical documents, photographs, artworks and artefacts related to the City of Maribyrnong, with records dating back as far as the late 19th century.

Footscray Historical Society Secretary Steve Wilson leads us through Ercildoune, which has been home to the Society since it acquired the building in 1970.

"It was originally built as a bank, the first bank built in Footscray. This was the National Bank of Australasia," Steve says.

"We also keep a fair bit of our collection in the old bank vault."

Inside the former vault, shelves are lined with voter rolls, rate or valuation books with gold-lettered spines dating back to the 1890s, and decades of bound editions of The Footscray Advertiser. It's a truly incredible archive, but according to Treasurer Maree Letteri, the collection exists for far more than just display.

"We want people to know we're not a museum," she says. "It's about research."

The Society assists residents researching family histories, local properties and community stories, offering research services for $11 an hour. Students and members can undertake independent research at Ercildoune free of charge.

One person who knows the value of the Society's collection is Committee Member Olympia Koziaris.

Growing up in Maribyrnong's Greek community, Olympia recognised that while migrant communities have played an important role in shaping the west's multicultural history, many of their stories have never been formally documented.

"I thought: Why don't I be the person that goes and finds the stories?" she says.

With the support of the Footscray Historical Society, Olympia successfully obtained a Maribyrnong City Council grant and began compiling the experiences of the post-war Greek community in Yarraville.

The project became her book Yiasou Yarraville, which tells the stories of 20 local families and their contribution to the suburb.

"When I wrote it, I wanted it to be something that represents a community that didn't have a voice or didn't have anything documented about their experience of – not just how they arrived – but how they settled and how they changed the environment," Olympia says.

Yiasou Yarraville is available for purchase at Ercildoune, alongside other research publications on local history, with proceeds supporting the Society's continued work.

The Society is keen to welcome more volunteers, particularly younger people, university students, and members of the area's many multicultural communities, to ensure a diverse range of histories are preserved for coming generations.

For Olympia, volunteering has been as rewarding personally as it has been professionally.

"The Historical Society are a lovely group of volunteers. They are so welcoming."

"I get to experience things I wouldn't normally experience. I get to learn things about where I live and my locality, which I love. It's enriching and it just makes you feel proud."

As Ercildoune approaches its 150th anniversary, the Footscray Historical Society hopes the milestone will encourage more people to step inside and discover the stories that continue to shape Melbourne's west.

To learn more about the Footscray Historical Society, upcoming events, or volunteer opportunities, visit their website:footscrayhistoricalsociety.org.au.

OPENING HOURS
Tuesday: 11am – 2pm
Saturday: 11am – 2pm

FILM REVIEWS

SCREENS

Films I am most excited about ...

By Michael Smith, a proud Westie, passionate film fan and owner of the Sun Theatre, adventurer and host of Thursday Drive on 88.9 Wyn-FM

THE FBI COULDN'T CRACK IT
SO THEY CALLED IN THE MOB.
BY ANY MEANS
BASED ON A TRUE STORY
YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II · NICOLE BEHARIE
COMING SOON TO CINEMAS

BY ANY MEANS

Rating: CTC
Director: Elegance Bratton
Cast: Mark Wahlberg, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Nicole Beharie
Genre: Thriller, drama, history
Opens: SEP 03

A hard to believe true story; a standout role for Mark Wahlberg. A young Black FBI agent is sent into 1960s Mississippi to investigate a wave of brutal killings targeting civil rights leaders. Forced to work alongside notorious mafia hitman Greg Scarpa (Wahlberg), he finds himself pulled into a deadly hunt where justice and vengeance begin to blur. Incredible to think that in the 60s, the FBI were struggling to make headway so enlisted a muscle guy / hit man to help them with the race violence of the South... when operating to the letter of the law will not protect the vulnerable.

DON'T LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Rating: CTC
Duration: 123 mins
Director: Dylan Southern, Will Lovelace
Cast: Noel Gallagher, Liam Gallagher
Genre: Music, documentary
Opens: SEP 09

Don't Look Back In Anger charts Liam and Noel Gallagher's triumphant reunion tour, Oasis Live '25, one of the most anticipated rock 'n' roll comebacks of our time. The film is an unapologetically uplifting account of the biggest musical event of 2025, capturing the experience and emotions of the band and their fans across the world. The unique perspective includes rehearsal, backstage, and onstage access as well as the first joint interviews with Noel and Liam in over 20 years.

HEART OF THE BEAST

Rating: CTC
Duration: 123 mins
Director: David Ayer
Cast: Brad Pitt, J.K. Simmons, Anna Lambe
Genre: Adventure, drama, thriller
Opens: SEP 24

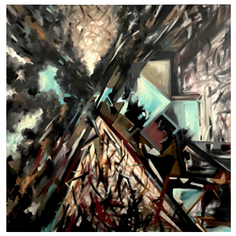
From director David Ayer, who helmed *Training Day* and *Fury* (with Pitt), comes a tale of survival in the harshest of landscapes. After a harrowing plane crash, Special Forces officer James Belmont and his combat dog, Odin, find themselves stranded deep in the Alaskan wilderness. Together, they are forced into a brutal fight for survival against the elements. Also featuring J.K Simmons, this is an intense adventure thriller that explores the unbreakable bond between a man and his best friend as they face their greatest battle yet. Fun fact – the South Island of New Zealand was used instead of Alaska... oooh, now I want to go....

THE LAST WHALE SINGER

Rating: PG (Mild themes)
Duration: 99 mins
Director: Reza Memari
Cast: Jenna Wheeler-Hughes, Vincent Tong, Bruce Dinsmore
Genre: Animation, family
Opens: SEP 24

Winner of the Grand Jury prize at the Blue Water Film Festival. When a monstrous creature escapes from a melting iceberg, a self-doubting teenage humpback whale must face his greatest fears and dive into the darkest depths with his friends to discover the mystical song that can save the oceans from destruction. A mystical, thoughtful animated film, for all ages.

ARTS EVENTS SEPTEMBER



Samira Khadivizand, MuHled Pulse / State 07, 2026, Oil on Linen, 102 x 102 x 3cm.

MUFFLED PULSE BY SAMIRA KHADAVISAND

Muffled Pulse has been developing since late July 2025 in response to the war in Iran.

Drawing on the geometric language and symbolism of Iranian historical architecture, the paintings move between within and beyond, fragment and whole, order and disruption, and unfold within a prolonged state of limbo between distance and proximity; where loss, vulnerability, and hope coexist, allowing meaning to emerge through the experience of looking rather than through fixed narratives.

The works adopt multiple expressions, at times unfolding as poetic compositions that reflect on suffocation and freedom.

UNTIL SEPTEMBER 20TH
TROCADERO PROJECTS, LEVEL 1, 40 LEEDS ST FOOTSCRAY,

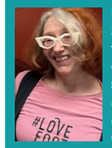
PANTRIES OF MELBOURNE EXHIBITION BY ADRIANNE WALUJO

Tucked in our pantries are the spices, herbs, and ingredients that connect us to family, culture, and the taste of home. This series offers intimate glimpses into the pantries of Melbourne's diverse communities, inviting curiosity, conversation, and appreciation for the many cultures that shape our city.

UNTIL NOV 27
BRIMBANK GALLERY AND SUNSHINE LIBRARY, 301 HAMPSHIRE ROAD, SUNSHINE

TUNE IN TO WESTSIDER RADIO FOR SHOWS ABOUT LOCAL ARTS & ARTISTS

Westsider Stories has up-to-date coverage of performing arts in the West.



Hosted by Fiona Scott-Norman, there's a new show every fortnight; streaming live on alternate Thursdays at 10am and 7pm, or on demand

westsiderradio.com.au/westside-stories

REMNANTS - WHAT REMAINS AND WHAT FLOWS - CURATED BY WANI TOAISHARA

Remnants brings together seven leading artists to explore how memory and care survive in the aftermath of colonial violence through film, photography, performance, and installation. The exhibition engages soil, water, and the body as living archives, bridging grief, resilience, and the possibility for alternative futures. Visitors are invited to witness and participate, shaping new connections and imagining justice beyond traditional narratives.

UNTIL OCT 18
177 WATTON ST, WERRIBEE, WYNDHAM ART GALLERY

FUNERAL FLOWERS - DIRECTED BY CANDY BOWERS

Seventeen-year-old Angelique dreams of being a florist. Flowers are her escape from bullies, from the care system, from the reality of her mum serving time. Inspired by the true story of Tottenham community leader Gina Moffatt, *Funeral Flowers* is a raw, lyrical and deeply human monologue about growing up, fighting back, and finding hope where it seems impossible. Winner of the Scotsman Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival, Emma Dennis Edwards' unflinching and luminous play now makes its Australian premiere -a story about social inequality, self-discovery, and the human ability to create beauty in the midst of struggle.

9TH AND 10TH SEPTEMBER
BOWERY THEATRE, 33 PRINCESS STREET, ST ALBANS

September radio highlights

By Mario Pinti, Program Manager

Dear Westsider readers

If you're running pub trivia nights, here are some questions you might want to consider adding to your list:

1. What is Klezmer?
2. What are the origins of Klezmer?
3. What does Ostralishe Kapelye mean?

Your cheat sheet will have these answers:
1. Klezmer is a genre of Yiddish folk music.
2. Klezmer's origins are tied to the Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews going back several centuries.
3. Ostralishe Kapelye is the Yiddish translation for Australian Klezmer Band.

Three questions guaranteed to stump most punters, unless they're keen Westsider readers. These folks will recall the story we ran on Ostralishe Kapelye in last June's edition, the very unique, very quirky, very danceable musical ensemble based in St Albans. And it's Ostralishe Kapelye's Klezmer songs that we're featuring in September's Westside Spotlight (7th and 19th at 10am and 7pm). The band has recorded five songs exclusively for Westsider Radio and it's with great pleasure that we'll be playing and chatting about them with band leader Rohan Iyer.

Staying on the topic of music, Westsider Radio hosts a bunch of music shows across the month that are rich and diverse in their offerings. Two of these shows are curated and presented by young people: local primary schooler Rui (Highvoltage, 5th at 4pm) and teenagers Owen and Wolfgang (Owen and Wofgang – The Reydio Shw, 19th at 8pm). Whether it's classic rock with a sprinkling of slap-your-thigh jokes (the former) or alternative rock tending to the obscure and astonishing (the latter) both shows are well worth your time.

Of course, as always, if you miss any of our shows' broadcast times you can go to the Westsider Radio website and listen back at your convenience.

Happy listening.

WESTSIDER RADIO
westsiderradio.com.au

SHADOW RESONANCE
LIVE CINEMATIC AMBIENT NEOCLASSICAL & EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

Minorarc Emily Rosner Violinsidious Willebrant Beyond the Lake

A night of live cinematic soundscapes and haunting melodies, where delicate strings meet deep, resonant drones and moments of quiet give way to powerful crescendos.

SUPPORTED BY Maribyrnong CITY COUNCIL Arts & Culture

SATURDAY 3RD OCT 18:30
Bluestone Church Arts Space
www.shadowresonance.au

RECOMMENDED READING

MINE
By Adam Ouston
$34.99

Adam Ouston's latest novel *Mine* uses a similar technique to his first book *Waypoints*: the novel is structured as a single sentence. This signature style immediately engrosses the reader into the mind of *Mine*'s narrator; a poet trapped at the bottom of a Tasmanian mineshaft. In this stream of consciousness, the reader is swept through both personal and collective histories, linking together the ambitions and downfalls of prominent figures.

Mine is filled with research and entertaining digressions, which weave together the themes of environmental destruction, greed, and the ghosts of memory in a satisfying conclusion. At the heart of the novel is Tasmania, and the impact of the mining industry. Blurring time and reality, Ouston crafts a compelling psychological journey which prompts thought and paints a rich picture of the haunted mining towns of Tasmania's past and present.

THE SUNDAY TIMES NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER
LONDON FALLING
A MYSTERIOUS DEATH IN A DARK CITY
AND A FAMILY'S SEARCH FOR TRUTH
PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE

LONDON FALLING
By Patrick Radden Keefe
$36.99

Patrick Radden Keefe, winner of the Baillie Gifford non-fiction prize returns with another examination of corruption and deceit, this time focused around a mysterious disappearance and death of London teenager Zac Brettler in 2019. In Patrick Radden Keefe's distinctive reporting style, he dissects and reveals the sinister truths behind the death, and takes the reader through interwoven histories of cities, families, the courts, police corruption, and the ways wealth and greed determine lives. Impressive and devastating.

Reviews by the Sun Bookshop – sunbookshop.com

WHATEVER AFTER, THE GRAPHIC NOVEL: FAIREST OF ALL

By Sarah Mlynowski

This book is about a little boy called Jonah and a girl called Abbey. When the little boy was downstairs, he knocked on the mirror and then it hissed and when you knock on it three times they went into a story, they went into Snow White. My favourite part was when they got to meet Snow White. Abbey is my favourite character because she is kind. Other kids should read this book because it's about Snow White and I like the book.

Review by Lucy – *St Augustine's Primary School*

THE HIDING PLACE
by Kate Mildenhall

BOOK REVIEW

If you have any great reading suggestions for young or older, please send them to editor@thewestsider.com.au

A group of friends and their families buy an old piece of land in the bush, hoping for peace, freedom, and a simple life close to nature. They imagine it as their own little paradise, a place to relax and feel happy again.

But things start to go wrong from the beginning. An accident causes trouble, the locals aren't friendly, and soon something happens which changes everything.

At first, I thought the story was just about friends wanting to spend time in nature. But it quickly turns dark, showing how people can change when things go wrong.

The book shows how even good people can make bad choices when they try to hide the truth. Some parts were a bit hard to follow, but I liked how it showed guilt, friendship, and fear. It made me think about how far people will go to protect themselves.

By the end, I realised that 'good people' can do terrible things when they believe they deserve happiness and freedom, but they end up hurting themselves because they can't face the truth.

AUGUST FALLING: THE AUTHOR'S CUT
by Les Zig

First published in 2018, *August Falling* has been published again this year as *The Author's Cut*, giving readers a new chance to experience this bittersweet story.

I really enjoyed this book. Even though it's not a love story, it shows us who we become as individuals and who we become when we are part of a couple. We all bring our own past, fears, and experiences into a relationship.

In this version, there is one page that really stood out to me. That page alone expresses August's feelings so well - the shock, the overwhelming emotions, the impossible situation, the confusion ... everything. It was a powerful moment that helped me understand what August was going through.

The book also made me think about acceptance. We cannot change our partner's past, but we can choose how we respond to it. Loving someone means accepting that they have lived a life before they met us, with both happy and painful memories.

Julie was my favourite character. I admired her strength, kindness, and the way she kept moving forward even though she had been through so much. I had mixed feelings about August. There were times when I understood why he acted the way he did, but there were also moments when I felt frustrated with him.

It was not a typical happy ending, but it felt real and stayed in my mind. It made me wonder what would happen next for both Julie and August. Overall, *August Falling* is a thoughtful book about healing, acceptance, and learning to move forward. It reminds us that our past helps make us who we are, but it does not have to control our future.

Reviews by Aryani Siti

The West's Saskia Robin releases her new EP Wick

By Marcus Brooke-Smith

Saskia Robin's debut EP *Wick* is an unforgettable blend of soaring indie rock melodies and deep grunge-tinged emotion. Perhaps the most powerful part of *Wick* is Saskia's lyrical talent and her amazing vocal range. Everything combines to make one of the best EPs to come out of Melbourne (let alone out of the Western suburbs) this year.

Who Knew comes flying into vision with a wild cacophony of guitar riffs and pounding drums that drop back as the opening verse calmly begins the song's razor sharp critique. The track races around, almost Pixies like, as it goes from big to small and back again. This breathless excitement runs through the whole EP and keeps the listener hanging on every word.

Soul Digger gives the glimpse of what *Like A Rolling Stone* might sound like if Cat Power had nabbed it off Dylan. Its powerful lyrics about agonising insecurities sit poignantly under the surface of the singalong chorus.

The 90s-alt undertones reemerge on *Body Breaks Me* as angular chords and powerful lyrics swirl to a mesmerising crescendo from which the closing track *Bones* glides out serenely and perfectly. *Bones* is one of my favourite tracks of 2026. I've lost count of the amount of times I've played it, each time wondering which lyric I'll get stuck on and forgetting just how cathartic it's euphoric confidence is. It's perfect as a single but hearing it in the context of *Wick* takes it (and the entire EP) to another level.

Doorstep

Marcus Brooke-Smith is the host of Doorstep – a monthly spoonful of music from the western suburbs of Melbourne/Naarm including local artists, local gigs and local releases.

8pm last Friday of the month
westsiderradio.com.au/doorstep
instagram.com/doorstep_radio

Community events in September

To add an event to the calendar please visit thewestsider.com.au/event-directory and click on 'submit your event'.

Tuesday 1 September
HOBSONS BAY ARTS SOCIETY MEMBERS EXHIBITION
- 11:00AM–4:00PM
- FREE
- LOUIS JOEL ARTS AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

Wednesday 2 September
INFUSE LAB - SPACE FOR ARTISTS TO CREATE
- 11:45PM–2:00PM
- FREE
- ST ALBANS COMMUNITY CENTRE

Thursday 3 September
LET'S TALK BOOKS
- 10:30AM–11:30AM
- FREE
- ALTONA LIBRARY

Friday 4 September
YOUTH ARTS PRESENTS: UPCYCLED ARTS NIGHT AGES 12-25
- 3:30PM–6:00PM
- FREE
- VISY CARES HUB, SUNSHINE

Saturday 5 September
SLOW FOOD EDGEWATER FARMERS' MARKET
- 9:00AM–1:00PM
- DONATION
- MARIBYRNONG FAMILY PARK, 337 GORDON ST

Sunday 6 September
SLOW FOODSCRAY
- 10:00AM–2:00PM
- FREE
- MADDERN SQUARE, 2 CHAMBERS ST, FOOTSCRAY

Monday 7 September
BASIC CLOTHING ALTERATIONS
- 1:00PM–3:00PM
- FREE
- BRAYBROOK COMMUNITY HUB

Tuesday 8 September
'BOOKS AND BICKIES' BOOK CLUB
- 7:00PM–8:30PM
- FREE
- MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Wednesday 9 September
WRITING THRILLERS: HOW TO KILL YOUR DARLINGS (LITERALLY!)
- 6:00PM–7:30PM
- FREE
- CAROLINE SPRINGS LIBRARY

Thursday 10 September
'BETTER MAN' AUTHOR TALK WITH BEN VASILIOU
- 4:30PM–5:30PM
- FREE
- MELTON LIBRARY & LEARNING HUB

Friday 11 September
POETRY GROUP
- 11:00AM–12:00PM
- FREE
- FOOTSCRAY LIBRARY

Saturday 12 September
MELTON CITY RELAY FOR LIFE
- 10:00AM START
- FREE
- BRIDGE RD RECREATION RESERVE

Sunday 13 September
WILLIAMSTOWN REGIONAL FARMERS' MARKET
- 9:00AM–2:00PM
- FREE
- ROBERTSON RESERVE

SEDDON VILLAGE
SNAPSHOTS OF SEDDON
Entries for Snapshots of Seddon 2026 are now open!
Send us your best snapshot of Seddon. Entries close on 6 September 2026, and photos for the People's Choice category will be displayed in the windows of Seddon Village traders from mid-September until the end of October.
Prizes will be awarded for the winners of the following categories:
• Kids 13 and under
• Youth 13-20
• Open
• People's Choice
• Old and New - Recording Seddon's History
For more information email us at info@seddon-village.com.au
www.seddon-village.com.au

Monday 14 September
SENIORS CHAIR YOGA
- 9:30AM–10:15AM
- FREE
- TARNEIT COMMUNITY CENTRE

Tuesday 15 September
BINGO MOVES
- 9:45AM–11:00AM
- FREE
- JAMIESON WAY COMMUNITY CENTRE

Wednesday 16 September
LEGO® PARTY
- 4:00PM–5:00PM
- FREE
- YARRAVILLE LIBRARY

Thursday 17 September
MEN'S HEALTH PROJECT - DAD'S MAN CAVE
- 6:30PM–8:30PM
- FREE ONLINE EVENT
- CALL 9249 4665

Friday 18 September
MOON LANTERN FESTIVAL
- 1:00PM - 3:00PM
- FREE
- MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Saturday 19 September
YARRAVILLE VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET
- 9:00AM–1:00PM
- FREE
- CRUICKSHANK PARK

Sunday 20 September
WOMEN'S SWIM NIGHT
- 6:30AM–8:30PM
- COST
- MARIBYRNONG AQUATIC CENTRE

Monday 21 September
ALL AGES CHESS
- 3:15PM–4:15PM
- FREE
- MANOR LAKES LIBRARY

Tuesday 22 September
KOKEDAMA WORKSHOP
- 11:00AM–2:00PM
- FREE
- PHOENIX YOUTH HUB, FOOTSCRAY

Wednesday 23 September
ESCAPE ROOM FOR TEENS - SCHOOL HOLIDAYS
- 3:00PM–4:30PM
- FREE
- BRAYBROOK LIBRARY

Thursday 24 September
EDGE ENSEMBLES THEATRE WORKSHOPS
- 5:00PM–7:00PM
- FREE
- BOWERY THEATRE, ST ALBANS

Friday 25 September
SALTWATER ART OPEN STUDIO
- 9:00AM-3:00PM
- FREE
- SALTWATER COMMUNITY CENTRE

Saturday 26 September
SOMETHING SKETCHY: LET'S DRAW BOOKS
- 1:30PM-2:30PM
- FREE
- ALTONA MEADOWS LIBRARY AND LEARNING CENTRE

Sunday 27 September
EYNESBURY MARKET
- 9:00AM-2:00PM
- FREE
- EYNESBURY HOMESTEAD

Monday 28 September
BRAIN TRAINING FOR SENIORS
- 2:00PM-3:00PM
- FREE
- WEST FOOTSCRAY LIBRARY

Tuesday 29 September
MAKE A NEWSPAPER PHOTO FRAME - SCHOOL HOLIDAYS
- 2:00PM-3:30PM
- FREE
- YARRAVILLE LIBRARY

Wednesday 30 September
FUN HOLIDAY BIKE RIDING LESSONS
- 10:00AM-11:00AM
- FREE
- BRAYBROOK COMMUNITY HUB

TOP PICK FOR SEPTEMBER

Community Planting Day
12 September 10AM-12PM

Community planting events enhance our parks and reserves,creating a greener city and providing habitat for native wildlife.

Register on the day or here at www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/Online-Forms/Community-Planting-Days-Registration

Community Bank · Seddon
Bendigo Bank

Opening hours:
Monday to Friday
9.30am to 4.00pm

90 Charles St, Seddon
Phone: 9687 2500
Email: seddon@bendigoadelaide.com.au

IMPORTANT
Bookings and pre-registrations may be required. Outdoor events may be affected by weather conditions. All event information is subject to change at any time without notice. The Westsider makes no guarantees regarding accuracy, availability, schedule changes, cancellations, or capacity limits. Please confirm all event details directly with the organiser or venue before attending.

Live music in September

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS AT KINDRED BANDROOM

Thursday 3 September
CRESCENT MOON
- 1-3PM
- FREE

Tucked away in the corner of a pub or bar, you will find *Crescent Moon* plying their trade with a combination of lap steel, twang and sweet three-part harmonies.

Crescent Moon turn out a swag of originals and put their stamp on a sample of other composers' work.

Every Thursday
FLOW MOTION KINDRED LATE NIGHT JAMS
- 7PM - LATE
- FREE

Every Thursday night join the Kindred House Band for an evening of high energy, totally improvised groove music. Playing Jazz, House, Funk and Hip Hop ... or wherever the night takes you. Grab a $10 pint or wine, pick up an instrument and get in on the jam. Or just listen in!

Saturday 5 September
RAY PERERIA FUNDRAISER
- 7PM
- $55 + BF

Ray Pereira African Drumming Fundraiser for Educational and Medical projects in Ghana and South Africa.

Featuring Ray's student drumming and dance groups plus special guest performances from Ghanaian musicians Nii Abli and Kofi Nortey.

Saturday 5 September
SKA VENDORS
- 7PM
- EARLY BIRD - $20 + BF

Celebrating the strength and diversity of Australia's ska, reggae and rocksteady community by connecting artists from across the country. Set to bring together some of Australia's finest ska and reggae talent when Perth favourites *Red's Tribe* head east and join Pat Powell and *The Ska Vendors* for a special Melbourne performance.

DJs *Larrabee* and *Mark 'Reggae Fever' Williamson* spinning 45s.

Sunday 6 September
ETHIO POETIC JAZZ SOCIETY
- 3PM
- $30 + BF

Ethio Poetic Jazz comes to the Kindred Bandroom once again with their multidisciplinary cultural and performing arts group showcasing poetry, life experiences, personal stories, jazz, music, theatre, storytelling, and cultural expressions.

Wednesday 9 September
VIDEO BINGO
- 6PM
- FREE

Our host Faz will keep you entertained as you sing along to Music Videos, TV Themes & Movie Scenes. There are multiple genres, great prizes to be won, and fun to be had! More *Video Bingo* this September on the 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th (*Seinfeld* edition) .

Thursday 10 September
SALLY FORD & THE IDIOMATICS THUR ARVO GIG SERIES
- 1-3PM
- FREE

This genre-defying quartet fuses the musical provenance of its members from latin to film music via ska, folk and funk.

Friday 11 September
PLONK EP LAUNCH
- 7PM
- $20 + BF

Plonk is an artistic project that investigates simplicity within music and explores how bare musical themes can progress and expand throughout a given work.

Saturday 12 September
HUGO RACE & MICHAELANGELO RUSSO ALBUM LAUNCH
- 7:30PM
- $35 + BF

Existential songwriting framed by the band's fusion of roots, electronica, Italian soundtracks and desert rock.

"A lot of joy and pain and reflection went into the making of this album and I hope that comes across. I made it all up for you..."

Thursday 17 September
NICK CHARLES THUR ARVO GIG SERIES
- 1-3PM
- FREE

Nick Charles brings a trophy cabinet full of blues and folk awards look and sound like in a show brimming with guitar wizardry, sharp songwriting, and timeless blues and folk tunes.

Wednesday 30 September
JAZZ THEFT AUTO
- 7:30PM
- $10 - $34 + BF

A live jazz heist where the musicians and audience are all in on it together.

A Melbourne jazz band is bringing Vice City to life where the band and audience are both in on the grand theft experience. *Jazz Theft Auto* blends the iconic *Grand Theft Auto* soundtrack with commentary on Vice City's morally anarchic underworld.

SEPTEMBER 30 ★ OCTOBER 8 ★ 7:30PM
Jazz theft auto
LIVE JAZZ STRAIGHT FROM Vice City
KINDRED
KINDRED BANDROOM ★ FRINGE FESTIVAL

KINDRED BANDROOM

3 Harris St, Yarraville
Phone: 9689 9859
Email: info@kindredstudios.com.au

Office hours:
Monday to Friday
9am to 5pm

FIND MORE EVENT & SIGN UP FOR OUR GIG GUIDE ONLINE AT KINDREDSTUDIOS.COM.AU/WHATS-ON

Fam Bam LIVE!

During the Spring school holidays, Wyndham's favourite theatre festival for kids returns!

BOOK TICKETS
wyncc.com.au

The Australian Ballet School Workshops

Monday 21 – Thursday 24 September

Coach Mon's Comedy Games

Wednesday 30 September
1pm

Balar Diburr Performance and Showcase

The Australian Ballet Education and Outreach Team

Thursday 24 September
2pm

Wolfgang in the Stars

Circa

Friday 2 October
7pm

Whalebone

Monday 28 September
1pm

Reputation – The Ultimate Taylor Swift Show

Saturday 3 October
7.30pm

Mr Snotbottom

Tuesday 29 September
3pm and 6pm

Werribee Concert Band - Celebrating 40 years

Sunday 4 October
3pm

Wyndham Cultural Centre
177 Watton Street, Werribee

@wyndhamculturalcentre

Wyndham Cultural Centre Theatre

wyndhamcity
city. coast. country

Celebrating the life and art of Giuseppe 'Pino' Calati

By Jeremy Boland

Residents of Melbourne's west are remembering the life and artistic contributions of Italian-born artist Giuseppe 'Pino' Calati, a creative figure whose work helped enrich the cultural life of St Albans and the surrounding suburbs. Born in Italy in 1916, Calati later made Australia his home and became known as both a painter and sculptor, working in Italy and Victoria after arriving in Australia in the post-war years.

His story sits within a wider history of change in Melbourne's west. After the Second World War, St Albans grew rapidly as European refugees and migrants settled in the area, many seeking affordable land, work and the chance to build more secure lives. A once-small farming settlement became a fast-growing suburb of new houses, workshops, schools, churches, sporting clubs and community organisations.

Calati's artworks reflect that environment. Pieces such as his acrylic work associated with the 'Roadside Drain' speak to the local streetscapes, edges and practical infrastructure of the western suburbs: places where paddocks, industry and new housing met. In St Albans, Sunshine, Deer Park and neighbouring areas, these were not abstract themes but part of daily life for families establishing themselves in a new country. His attention to ordinary scenes gave dignity to the suburban landscape and recognised the beauty in places often overlooked.

From far left, Tamara Carr, Michael Shiel, Richard Orgis, Brimbank Mayor Cr Virginia Tachos, and Richard Carthew.

As an Italian-Australian artist, Calati's practice also resonates with the experience of many migrants who came to Melbourne's west during the twentieth century. For those communities, art could carry memory, language, faith, labour and belonging across continents. Calati's painting and sculpture connected the traditions of his birthplace with the realities of suburban Victoria, expressing both the disruption of migration and the creativity required to make a home in unfamiliar surroundings.

Community members who knew of his work describe him as an artist whose creations brought colour, inspiration and a sense of identity to the growing communities of Melbourne's west. His contribution forms part of the rich multicultural story that shaped the region over many decades, alongside the efforts of migrant families who worked, built homes, raised children and created clubs and associations that gave the suburbs their distinctive character.

Today, Calati's artworks continue to be appreciated by those who value local history and artistic expression. They are important not simply because they were made by a skilled artist, but because they help tell a local story: how migrants and their descendants transformed Melbourne's west from a fringe district into a place of cultural energy, resilience and shared memory.

The artworks by Giuseppe 'Pino' Calati currently held by the St Albans Youth Club are to be formally handed over to the Brimbank community, ensuring that these important pieces remain accessible and preserved as part of the area's shared cultural heritage. The pieces were restored through the Robert Cripps Institute for Cultural Conservation, supporting their long-term care and public appreciation.

The Footscray musician building community and opportunities for contemporary artists

By Michael Aliani

Composer and event producer Ivan Bullock has spent a career of 25 years exploring the spaces between classical training and experimental sound. Music has taken him to Japan and Europe, but now Footscray is his home.

He is the creative force behind Minorarc, a band that brings together violin music, guitars and keyboards, to delve into original works that border contemporary classical, ambient and at times even modern metal.

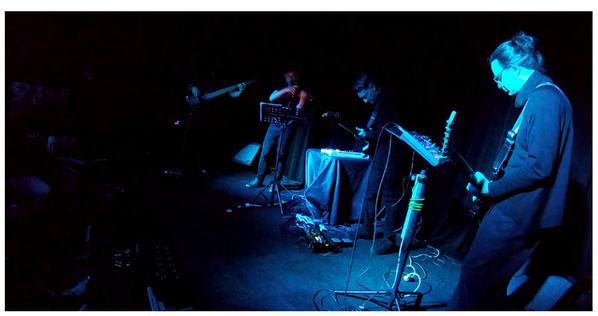
From a home studio, he is one of many westside artists who go about much of their process in an unrecognised and determined solitude, for the sake of art alone.

After setting up home in Footscray three years ago, Ivan's pieces soon found the hearts of Eric Shek (diverse violinist) and Brendan Henriques (music teacher and Bass touring artist). The group's first meeting was at Footscray's Bluestone Church Arts Space, a historic landmark that through Maribyrnong City Council Arts and Culture, supports creative arts via a venue of equal measures accessibility and uniqueness.

Minorarc was immediately enamoured by its eerie persona and reverberant sound, and have been regulars creating there ever since. During this first rehearsal however, Ivan envisioned a future where a collective of like-minded artists performed publicly within the bluestone walls.

Thankfully, event production is no stranger to Ivan, he has built communities and platforms for independent artists since 2005. His Enzyme events have aided underground and electronic musicians in finding performance opportunities throughout Melbourne. A series which celebrated its 20th incarnation in June this year, at Footscray's Mamma Chen's, a night that I was proud to be a part of.

This year however, he also established something new. *Shadow Resonance* is a series of concerts that focus on stringed instruments from the renaissance to the present day, moving the themes from underground electronics into the realms of ambient neoclassical atmosphere.



The first event was held at Club Voltaire in May, and its selling out came as both a surprise, and a firm indicator that boundary-pushing and cinematic music retains a great home in Melbourne for intimate and engaging nights out.

Now, Ivan is taking *Shadow Resonance* in a special incarnation, to the Melbourne Fringe Festival. Through the support of Maribyrnong City Council Arts and Culture, he's presenting five artists within his second home, yes... the Bluestone Church Arts Space.

Melbourne's West is set to offer a unique evening of performances by Violinsidous (solo violinist with machines), Willebrant (solo bass with field drone recordings), Beyond the Lake (cello and guitar ambient duet), Emily Rosner (contemporary harp and vocals), and Minorarc.

A night of cinematic soundscapes and melodies, where delicate strings meet deep, resonant drones and moments of quiet give way to powerful crescendos. An opportunity to step into the shadows, and experience music that lingers.

Shadow Resonance

Saturday 3rd October 6.30pm,
Bluestone Church Arts Space
8A Hyde Street, Footscray,

Event Info: shadowresonance.au
Tickets: melbournefringe.com.au/whats-on/events/shadow-resonance

Big ideas, local stages: Melbourne Fringe in the West

Imagine Grand Theft Auto set to a live jazz soundtrack, an evening of John Farnham bangers, theatre with a cast of actors aged from 4 to 93, or circus popping up in your local shopping strip.

These are just some of the surprising and entertaining experiences coming to Maribyrnong and Hobsons Bay during this year's Melbourne Fringe Festival, running from 29 September to 18 October.

Fringe is Victoria's longest running multi-arts festival. For more than forty years it has given artists the freedom to try new ideas and invited audiences along for the ride. Whether you're a seasoned theatre-goer or simply curious about what's happening around the corner, Fringe is a chance to discover something unexpected, inspiring or just plain fun.

Here's a snapshot of some of the events happening locally this October.

For full program details including dates and ticket bookings, head to the links below.

maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/fringe

hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/fringe

La Trampa
30 SEPTEMBER – 3 OCTOBER
BLUESTONE CHURCH ARTS SPACE, FOOTSCRAY

A bilingual (Spanish and English) theatre work by Smoko Theatre, exploring family, migration, grief and belonging – told through the eyes of three sisters who stage seances to uncover deeper truths.

Jazz Theft Auto
30 SEPTEMBER AND 8 OCTOBER
KINDRED STUDIOS, YARRAVILLE

A live jazz heist where the musicians and audience are all in on it together... asking the question "how can modern content be original when everything has already been stolen?"

The Enormous Radio
30 SEPTEMBER–10 OCTOBER
THE SUBSTATION, NEWPORT

An immersive audio experience that speculates on the possibility of interspecies communication.

Age of Reason
1–2 OCTOBER
KINDRED STUDIOS, YARRAVILLE

Jayda D'Agostino is a twenty-something, self-proclaimed John Farnham 'stan'. Join her and her band for an evening of coming-of-age stories set to a soundtrack of Farnsy classics.

In Between Worlds
3 OCTOBER
LOUIS JOEL ARTS AND COMMUNITY, ALTONA

Embark on an immersive art journey with live art, spoken word, sound, and site-responsive practice.

Greg Kimball: One More Year
8–15 OCTOBER
PRIDE OF OUR FOOTSCRAY

Greg Kimball was never going to play AFL. He knew that. His body knew that. His knees vocalised it daily. But somewhere between middle age and a dumb idea, he decided to try anyway. One more year of footy. Just to see...

Made to Share
11 OCTOBER
WOODS STREET ARTS SPACE, LAVERTON

A creative workshop especially for older people, bringing together art and food in a relaxed and welcoming space.

Prime Time
14–17 OCTOBER
THE SUBSTATION, NEWPORT

A celebration of life in all its stages, from award-winning theatre company Born in a Taxi – featuring a cast of actors aged from 4 to 93.

Holding the VĀ
14–18 OCTOBER
BLUESTONE CHURCH ARTS SPACE, FOOTSCRAY

A Pasefika spoken word theatre work that journeys through humour, grief, migration, climate anxiety, family and belonging from a Pacific diaspora perspective.

From the Mouth
16–17 OCTOBER
WOODS STREET ARTS SPACE, LAVERTON

Live music, short film screenings and community conversations centred around the unique ecology of the Kororoit Creek mouth.

Ocker
8 AND 11 OCTOBER IN WILLIAMSTOWN
9 OCTOBER IN YARRAVILLE
10 OCTOBER IN FOOTSCRAY

From local First Nations company Na Djinang comes Ocker, a new circus work combining daring acrobatics, physical comedy and unexpected encounters.

Part performance, part absurd expedition, Ocker sees a troupe of circus artists laying a portable railway track in real time as they race after something perpetually out of reach.

Popping up in locations across Footscray, Yarraville and Williamstown, Ocker is an energetic celebration of curiosity, persistence and collective adventure.

Presented in partnership by Maribyrnong and Hobsons Bay City Councils, and suitable for all ages.

SUPPORTER CONTENT

MELBOURNE
FRINGE
FESTIVAL
OCKER
BY NA DJINANG CIRCUS
A roving circus show performed on a portable railway track, built in real time.
Commonwealth Reserve, Williamstown
Thursday 8 October, 5pm
Sunday 11 October, 12pm and 4pm
Ballarat Street Pop-up Park, Yarraville
Friday 9 October, 5pm
Nicholson Street Mall, Footscray
Saturday 10 October, 12pm and 4pm
Suitable for all ages. Free, bookings not required
Presented as part of Fringe Westside
Australian Government
Creative Australia
NA DJINANG CIRCUS
Maribyrnong CITY COUNCIL
CREATIVE CITY HOBSONS BAY
HOBSONS BAY CITY COUNCIL

From Footscray to Rome: Louis Lucente takes on Mark Antony

By Jen Dean

Footscray local Louis Lucente is swapping Melbourne's inner west for the Roman Empire this September, taking on one of Shakespeare's great leading roles in Melbourne Shakespeare Company's new production of *Cleopatra & Antony*.

For Lucente, who moved to Footscray with his family almost three years ago, the role comes at a particularly fitting point in his life.

"We really love the energy and community of the West," he says. "There are lots of young families and creative people around, so it feels like a pretty natural fit for us."

He has enjoyed watching his neighbourhood evolve, from the RecWest precinct to plans for the former Footscray Hospital site, and says the growing green spaces and community pockets make it "a great place for our kids to grow up".

Lucente caught the performing bug as a teenager, undertaking professional training after high school before building a career across theatre and television. His work has taken him around Australia and internationally through musicals, plays and screen projects.

These days, with a young family at home, his priorities are changing.

"I'm increasingly looking for opportunities to do ambitious work here in Melbourne," he says. "I'd wanted to work with Melbourne Shakespeare Company for a while, so *Cleopatra & Antony* came along at a really great point in my life."

Taking on Mark Antony, however, is no small undertaking.

"I won't lie, it's daunting. You're aware of actors like Alan Rickman, Anthony Hopkins and Ralph Fiennes who've tackled Antony, so there's this enormous history sitting behind the role."

His solution has been to forget the legend and find the person underneath.

"Antony doesn't know he's 'Mark Antony' in the historical sense. He's just this guy trying to survive politically, hold onto his power and identity, and navigate this extraordinary relationship."

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is performed far less frequently than tragedies such as *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, perhaps because of its sheer scale. The play hurtles between countries, warfare, political intrigue and an enormous love story.

But Lucente says underneath the epic history are two people "completely intoxicated by one another".

Melbourne Shakespeare Company's adaptation, directed by Sonya Suares, goes further by reversing the familiar title to *Cleopatra & Antony* and deliberately placing Cleopatra's perspective first.

"Cleopatra's story has traditionally been filtered through a Roman lens," Lucente says. "She's often painted as this exotic temptress who distracted Antony from greatness, almost the Yoko Ono of the Roman Empire."

Putting Cleopatra first asks audiences to consider whose version of history they have inherited and who was able to write it. It also changes Antony.

"It becomes less about this great Roman being 'led astray' and more about two very powerful people trying to reconcile love, ambition, and who they are in public with who they are privately."

Lucente has found an unexpectedly contemporary comparison for the couple.

"I keep thinking of them as a kind of middle-aged Romeo and Juliet. Except rather than two teenagers whose families are at war, you've got two rulers whose relationship can literally change the course of history."

"If you love something like *Game of Thrones* or *The Odyssey*, with political plotting, battles, betrayals and enormous personalities, you'll recognise this world pretty quickly," he says.

Audiences shouldn't expect reverential Shakespeare preserved behind glass.

"I wouldn't quite call it Shakespeare for Dummies, but we're definitely not making a museum piece."

Instead, Lucente promises a huge story in an intimate room – and a Shakespearean epic that might feel considerably closer to home than audiences expect.

"Plus, one of the great things about living in Footscray is how close we actually are to the CBD, so I'd love to see plenty of fellow Westies in the audience."

Cleopatra & Antony is at fortyfivedownstairs, 45 Flinders Lane Melbourne – August 20 - September 13

Elegantly bold: the polished artistry of Cassidy La Crème

By Gary Lee

Cassidy La Crème is a multifaceted performer; an established DJ, singer, and showgirl who has captured the attention of audiences in Australia and as far afield as Malaysia, earning her the title of the 'Malaysia's Marilyn Monroe.'

Renowned for her remarkable ability to adapt and transform, Cassidy embodies the essence of a chameleon, skilfully shifting her persona to captivate and entertain diverse crowds. Her dynamic presence and artistic versatility have solidified her status as a prominent figure in the entertainment industry, both locally and internationally.

Cassidy is a familiar face at Grazeland, where her infectious energy and larger-than-life personality make her a standout presence, and just recently, she performed for the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Telethon and helped raise over $1.5 million to support refugees and asylum seekers.

Known for her impeccable style, Cassidy consistently dresses to impress, embodying a spirit of fun and enthusiasm that captivates those around her. Trust me, you will notice her when she enters the room.

Imagine our excitement when we found out Cassidy resides in Seddon. I caught up with Cassidy to learn more about the person behind the persona.

How would you describe yourself professionally?

I describe myself as a modern showgirl for a new generation and 'The Hype Girl You Never Knew You Needed!' At the heart of everything I do is creating unforgettable moments that bring people together, whether that's through live vocals, DJing, storytelling or crowd interaction.

My signature performances combine old Hollywood glamour with contemporary energy. I sing live while DJing, blending powerhouse vocals, choreography and audience participation into a show that's somewhere between a concert, a cabaret and a dance party. It's theatrical, interactive and designed to make people feel like they're part of the experience rather than simply watching it.

Alongside my showgirl performances, I specialise in multilingual entertainment, performing songs in multiple languages as a way of connecting with diverse communities and celebrating different cultures. I also work as a live entertainment DJ for major sporting events, including AFLW games, where my role is to build energy in the stadium and create an atmosphere that unites thousands of people.

Beyond the stage, I'm passionate about using my voice to create impact. As a motivational speaker, radio host and advocate for the LGBTQIA+ and neurodiverse communities, I love having honest conversations about authenticity, confidence and belonging. Whether I'm speaking to a room of professionals, interviewing performers on air or standing in front of thousands at a major event, my goal is always the same, to help people feel seen, connected, uplifted and inspired.

How long have you lived in Seddon?

This time round I have been calling the West home for two years now and am loving every minute of it. I think Seddon is the West's best kept secret and has such a beautiful community that it's been so wonderful to get to be a part of.

I have had the honour of being the resident Saturday night DJ & hype girl at the iconic Grazeland in Spotswood for four years now and love bringing the party to their stages every weekend.

What initially attracted you to the neighbourhood?

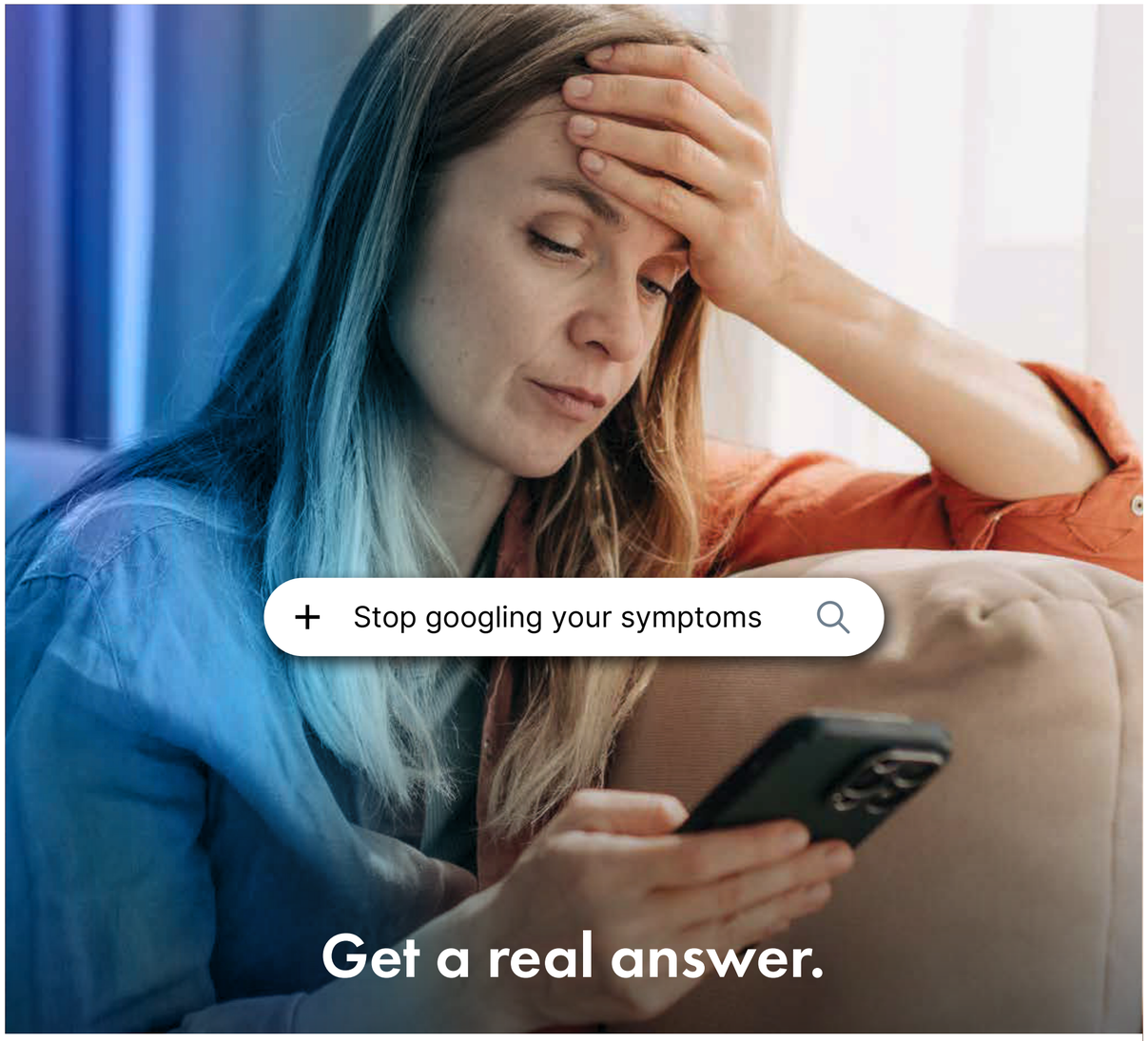
I've always loved the West, having lived in Kensington and Avondale Heights last time I lived in Melbourne (about 10 years ago). Many of my family have always been Westsiders with relatives spread across Williamstown and Spotswood, through to Kensington, Maribyrnong, and Melton, the West has always been a staple for us to visit on our yearly visits while I was growing up and all of my family have always stuck to the West since relocating back from Queensland where we were raised.

What are some of your favourite hangouts/places in the West to visit/play/eat?

Grazeland, Batlle Kart, Pride of Our Footscray, Little Foot (Footscray), Moon Dog Wild West, Local Folk (Kensington),

How do you describe the West in three words?

Vibrant, eclectic and welcoming.



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I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD ... be distributing food each week to people in need

NTIW

As told to Mario Pini

I Never Thought I Would... introduces you to everyday Westies who are at a place and time in their lives doing things they never imagined or had only dreamt of doing. Join them as they talk about the sideroads, cul-de-sacs, fortuitous turns and potholes they've experienced along the way.

I Never Thought I Would is now available as a podcast series on Westsider Radio.

westsiderradio.com.au/i-never-thought-i-would

Randa Beirouti is the Founder of Reaching Out In The Inner West Of Melbourne Inc (Reaching Out), a Footscray based charity that provides essential care to people in need.

Reaching Out is a service to people in our community who are experiencing homelessness or are generally really struggling. We provide essential items like home-cooked meals, non-perishable food items, fresh produce, meat, bedding, clothing and toiletries.

We are all volunteers. We're a philosophically based spiritual group. We're not a religious group. We operate from the premise of love for all, selflessness and giving support to those in need.

Reaching Out started in 2005. When I became involved about 16 years ago, we were providing food for about 30 people. When COVID hit, we saw our numbers increase quite dramatically, and they have since continued to increase.

The people we serve are coming from different areas of Melbourne, not only from the inner west. We're getting international students who might be living in the city. People living in the outer west from Melton to Werribee. We're getting people from Box Hill and northern suburbs like Craigieburn and Broadmeadows. We don't judge.

There are no restrictions on people coming to our service. If you're going to wait in line for a few hours, then there's clearly some level of need in your life.

Our service operates from Victoria University. It's where we receive donations, sort and dispatch all our goods to our main outreach locations which include the Monday night service at the Nicholson Street Mall in Footscray from 5.50pm to 7.30pm, and at the Paisley Street Baptist Church on Wednesdays.

Residents of inner Footscray are really quite supportive of what we do. In Nicholson Street Mall, there are some traders that perhaps object to us being there. I totally understand how what we do might impact services and traders but we do take steps to minimise any disruptions. On Mondays, for example, we start at a time when businesses are generally closing up.

One of the challenges we face is attracting and keeping volunteers – though some have been with us for quite a while now. Aggressive behaviour in the mall can happen at times. But we have ways to ensure those people, and volunteers, are safely managed.

Giving and helping people is itself a reward, and it's also the way I was brought up. My mum taught me always to give. My early childhood was in Egypt, we had very little, but I remember my mother would still make food and manage to bring things together to give to people that were in need.

I came to Australia with my family when I was eight. We were sponsored by my father's siblings. It was very tough in the beginning when everything is so different. Both parents had to work in factory jobs, my mother for the first time. We lived for a number of years in public housing before my parents bought a place in Coburg.

Before committing myself to Reaching Out I worked as an economist, researching such things as aged care policy, kindergarten policy, immigration policy. Economics has a role to play in our society in terms of structures and policies but a response to the issues that impact the people who seek our help is more than economics – it's about directly helping people in need, because people in need are quite vulnerable. The whole philosophy is to share and provide a service to people from a humanitarian point of view.

Photo credit: Lucy Foster.

The River

by Zoë Bastin Dance

An intimate contemporary dance performance on the banks of Werribee River on Bunurong Country.

Saturday 3 October
7.30am – 8.30am and 6pm – 7pm

Bungies Hole
behind Werribee Bowls Club, Werribee

Cost: $15–$20

www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/the-river

MELBOURNE FRINGE FESTIVAL

wyndhamcity city.coast.country

Pondering the world as I sonder

By Qaima Chatha

The English language is quite fascinating, and ever evolving, especially when you discover new words that hold such deep meaning such as... sonder.

Sonder comes to me in flashes, in the moments when I'm not trying to understand anything at all.

It happens in the ordinary midst of life, watching someone adjust their bag or scroll on their phone. They have expressions that change so quickly. I don't know their name. I don't know their story. But in a sudden realisation I feel their world brushing against mine.

Sometimes it's the person who laughs loudly at a joke I'll never know.

Sometimes it's a kid dragging their feet, a brain of stories I'll never hear.

Sometimes it's someone with tired eyes whose experiences I'll never experience.

I catch these eagerly. They're small, fragile things, glimpses into lives I'll never enter...

At the station I watched a woman tap her foot in a rhythm that only she could make sense of. I wondered what she was thinking. What she was waiting for. I only saw her briefly and yet those seconds of her world against mine stayed with me longer than people I've known.

Another time I saw a girl, tracing patterns on her sleeve, patterns only her eyes could see. I'll never know what she was holding together, never know the meaning of those patterns but I did feel her quiet strength even from my distance.

And then there are cinematic moments, moments that make life feel like a movie. A stranger who smiles at their phone, the person wiping their eyes when no one is looking, a group of friends laughing like the world is theirs.

Every one of them has a story as complicated and layered as mine.

Every one of them has a story I'll never hear.

Every one of them a main character I'll never read about.

There are also the rare times someone's universe opens enough for you to take a peek but never step inside, because sonder makes the world feel bigger.

But it also makes it gentler.

I know they matter.

I know they're living, trying, hoping, hurting, loving just like me.

And once you start noticing, it becomes impossible to stop...

And that is the concept of sonder.

Now more than ever teens should reach for a book and let their imagination run free

By Roshan Ratnam Murugappan

There was a period of my life where I could read for hours.

As a primary school student I absolutely loved to read. I would race through the missions of *Alex Rider*, lose myself in the vivid world of *Wings of Fire* and join the adventures of the *Famous Five*. Books weren't just words on a page, they were new worlds that I could enter. Each chapter brought a new character, a new environment and another element to the story, and my imagination seemed to have no limit. But somewhere along the way that changed.

As I entered high school my workload increased; assignments, tests and extracurricular activities took over my time. The constant pressure to keep up meant I had less time to read for enjoyment. At the same time social media became an increasingly easy way to fill in the spare moments of my day; a few minutes of scrolling could quickly turn into an hour. But, I don't think I'm alone in this.

For many teenagers, reading can feel like another task rather than something we do out of enjoyment. When there are textbooks and screens competing for our attention, reading a fictional novel is the last thing on our to-do list. Yet, perhaps that is exactly why we need to read!

Reading gives us something scrolling often doesn't: the opportunity to slow down and immerse ourselves in our own world. Instead of constantly moving between short form videos, a novel takes us on a journey, one which asks us to focus and use our own imagination. And imagination is the most important thing a book can give us.

When we watch a movie, much of the worldbuilding is already created for us; we can see the characters, the setting and tensions that cause conflicts in the film. A book is vastly different, it gives us the words and our minds build the rest. We imagine what the characters look like, the setting's intricacies and what might happen next. Every reader can therefore experience the same story in a different way.

Furthermore, reading can also introduce us to perspectives beyond our own. A novel can place us in another person's shoes, encourage us to understand their experience, culture and emotions that we may never be able to encounter ourselves. Even fictional characters can teach about courage, resilience and what it means to grow.

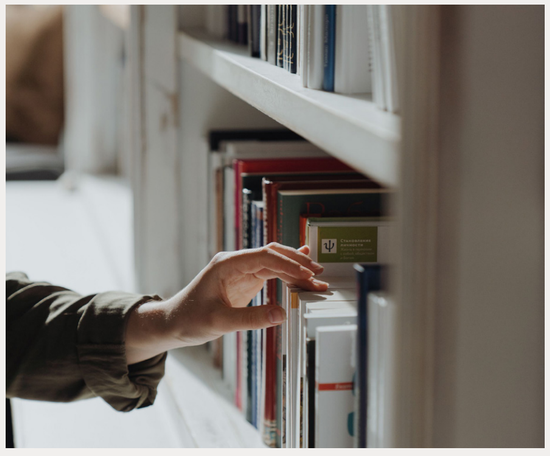
Additionally, reading gives a place to escape. Life as a teenager can often feel overwhelming. As high school students we know this best; there are deadlines to meet, expectations to manage and an endless stream of notifications from our phones. A book can provide us a quiet break from all the things that make life hectic. For a few chapters, we can forget about the notifications and escape into another world.

And you don't have to become a lifelong reader overnight; maybe start with ten minutes before bed. Visit your local library and choose something that genuinely interests you. It can be anything! Fantasy, mystery, science fiction, biographies, comics or anything that'll motivate you to turn the next page. I, for one, am a big fan of fantasy novels, especially ones that involve vivid world building and dragons. I've recently picked up *Talon Saga* by Julie Kagawa and Christopher Paolini's *Inheritance Cycle*.

But at the end of the day, rediscovering reading isn't about trying to become the primary school version of myself; it's about understanding what my younger version already understood: books can be fun. They make us inquisitive and can transport us somewhere we can never dream of.

In a world where our attention is being pulled in a hundred different ways, perhaps we should give ourselves permission to slow down, open a book and let our imagination run free.

So, the next time you find yourself reaching for your phone, try reaching for a book instead. Turn the page. Let your imagination take you somewhere new and keep imagining.



See the difference your local bank can make – put your money where your community is

Most of us don't spend much time thinking about our bank accounts. We tap our cards, pay our bills, and expect our money to sit safely where we left it. But what if the simple act of choosing where you bank could directly fund the sports clubs, charities, and social enterprises that make the inner west such a vibrant place to live?

At Community Bank Seddon, we operate on a very simple premise: banking can, and should, do good.

Whilst we are proud partners of Bendigo Bank, every single dollar we give back is generated right here by our local branch, Community Bank Seddon, and is powered entirely by our local customers.

Like many of the incredible social enterprises operating across our neighbourhoods, we are a profit-for-purpose organisation. We are the vehicle that facilitates community growth simply by doing what banks do every day.

To date, we have supported over 260 community organisations, sporting clubs, schools, kinders, festivals and local events, injecting over $5.4 million directly back into our local community. Whether it is funding a local footy team's new uniforms, supporting a neighbourhood house or providing grants for essential local services, that money stays right here in the West.

But here is the most surprising part of that $5.4 million milestone, and the part that I genuinely want every local business and resident to hear: we have achieved all of this with just a 1.4% market share. Imagine that, just for a second. If we can generate over $5.4 million of local impact with less than 2% of the local banking business, imagine what we could do if we moved the dial.

Now imagine the scale of the impact we could have within our community if we reached 3%, 4%, or even 5% market share. By simply shifting a fraction more of our collective banking business to our local branch, we could easily double or triple the funding available to support grassroots projects, local clubs and vital community services every single year.

The potential to transform our local area is entirely in our own hands. We don't need to wait for government grants or corporate philanthropists; we simply need to look at how we manage our own finances.

So, I have a proposition for the readers of The Westsider. If you are an individual who wants their money to work for their neighbourhood or a local organisation or social enterprise that currently has a bank account, and might one day need funding, we want to talk to you.

We invite you to come and see if we can match, or even beat your current banking offering. If we can, making the switch means you are actively funding your own community's future without altering your bottom line.

Let's talk about how we can fund your mission—and the mission of the broader west—by simply changing the way you bank.

Ashley Coles
Branch Manager
Community Bank Seddon

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Spicy olive dipping oil

By Lizzie Moss

One of the things I love most about living in the West is the abundance of olive trees.

When I bought my little home on the doorstep of the West Gate Tunnel two and a half years ago, I knew immediately that I wanted to put in olive hedging. I was lucky to find a home with an enormous olive tree in the front yard, so now I truly have an abundance.

For the past two years those olives have been picked and carefully preserved by other friends in the West who have such skills. But this year, I wanted something different. I took the 10.5 kilograms of olives from my tree and dropped them in Newport, joining thousands more of the fruit collected by my neighbours. It was part of the Olives to Oil Festival by CERES, in which the community's olive oil is pressed into one big, mega blend. After a few weeks, you get to go and pick up the community-blend olive oil. I think it cost me $5 for the glass bottles. I taste-tested it by making this dipping oil, using olives picked and preserved last year from my tree. I was very smug about it all.

You should serve this with fresh bread. I only had stale crackers but was still licking the pan. My oil may not be the finest quality in all the land and it is certainly not bright green like those oils you see in Italy. But it is mine, from my garden, picked by me and mixed with the best of my neighbour's crops. And in that sense, it is liquid gold.

Ingredients:

- A very, very large glug of preferably homemade olive oil (but store bought is fine!)
- A large handful of parsley
- A large handful of pitted olives
- One large clove of garlic
- Slivered almonds
- Chilli flakes
- Focaccia to serve (or in my case, stale crackers!)

Method:

1. Finely chop everything.
2. On a low heat, add every ingredient in the pan and warm for a few minutes or until the garlic starts to colour.
3. Remove from heat. Eat.

Lizzie Moss is a home cook and pasta lover, usually found hosting dinner parties and generally making a mess of her little kitchen in the inner west. Pasta, please! is her Italian fever dream. You can follow @pastaplease_ on Instagram, TikTok, Youtube or Substack.

Smile Buffalo – serving smiles one delicious dish at a time

By Gary Lee

Smile Buffalo sets itself apart from other local Thai restaurants by providing a more upscale dining experience. With an elegant ambiance and sophisticated decor, it provides a refined atmosphere that elevates traditional Thai cuisine in the West.

Smile Buffalo is a brightly lit establishment situated in the vibrant heart of Yarraville, conveniently located near the iconic Sun Theatre.

The welcome to Smile Buffalo was impeccable. We were greeted immediately with big smiles, as our wait staff quickly grabbed an iPad (to take our orders) and ushered us to our seats.

The restaurant was bustling. The natural materials throughout the interior and the soft lighting made the space warm and inviting. We particularly liked the hanging greenery; long, wispy ferns draping down from the ceiling. The walls are a mix of dark, solid surfaces and intricately patterned wooden panelling. At the back of the room, centred against the wall is a prominent neon sign that reads 'SMILE BUFFALO' with stylised bull horns.

The impressive bar complements the space, featuring an extensive selection of premium spirits, wine and cocktails; making it a perfect destination for those seeking a fun night out, or for a celebration.

We ordered the spicy steamed barramundi with garlic, mint, coriander, fish sauce, chilli, celery, and lime juice dressing. Despite the menu indicating a spiciness level of three chillies for the dish, it wasn't as spicy as we anticipated, so we requested fresh red chillies, and they were fiery! We also had the crispy pork belly stir-fried with Chinese broccoli, soybean sauce, oyster sauce and chilli. The two dishes we ordered were both fresh, flavourful and complemented steamed rice beautifully, so make sure you order some.

The overall dining experience was pleasing. We really appreciated the large windows that provide an expansive view of the Yarraville pop-up park outside, an ideal setting for observing the vibrant atmosphere and diverse activities of the area.

The service provided was exceptionally attentive, with the wait staff consistently refilling our water throughout the evening.

And finally, the cashier offered us delightful fruity chewy candies after we paid, just a little sweetener to a great night.

Whether you're dining in, grabbing takeaway, or ordering for a group, it's the kind of place you'll want to come back to repeatedly.

I enjoyed this place so much I returned for their Pad Thai on another day. A true showstopper, their signature Pad Thai was impeccably prepared with egg, dried shrimp, and tofu, then tossed in the restaurant's special Pad Thai sauce, and served in a delicate, eye-catching egg net.

More than just a cheeky pint

By Craig Lush

As craft beer lovers in the inner west, we're spoiled for choice with world-class independent breweries right on our doorstep. But a great beer journey isn't just about visiting the taprooms where the magic is brewed—it's also about local venues that curate a decent line-up alongside a great feed.

Dropping into The Cheeky Pint on Barkly Street in Footscray over consecutive Wednesdays was a timely reminder of just how great local pubs can be for sampling excellent craft beer close to home. From the moment we walked in, we felt welcome—from the cozy corner packed with comfortable couches to the variety of table options for enjoying their pub classics.

From house taps to curated classics

Regulars to Barkly Street might recall that The Cheeky Pint originally launched as a brewpub, serving beers from the house taps right behind the bar. Under new ownership, however, the venue has quietly shifted its focus away from house brewing. While you won't find house-made, small-batch brews on tap anymore, the copper-accented pub hasn't abandoned its craft credentials.

Instead of brewing their own, they've transitioned into a neighborhood pub that supports local independent craft heavyweights. On my most recent visit, the craft selection on tap was headlined by local favorites like Hop Nation's Pale Ale and their standout 'Chop' IPA, alongside Mountain Culture's APL (Australian Pale Lager). While the remaining taps lean towards larger commercial offerings, having top-tier brews from Footscray's own Hop Nation and Blue Mountains craft icons on tap ensures there's always a quality pint waiting for craft enthusiasts.

Elevated pub fare to match the pour

A good craft line-up is only half the equation, and where The Cheeky Pint really shines is pairing those beers with top-notch pub classics.

On my first visit, I tried the Mexican parma, and it was easily one of the best parmas I've had in recent memory—generous, perfectly cooked, and packed with flavour that matched exceptionally well with the punchy hops of Hop Nation's Chop IPA. Returning the following week, the Mexican parma was so good I couldn't resist ordering it a second time, and it delivered on every front once again.

My wife opted for the Wednesday Steak Special, which was cooked to absolute perfection—melt-in-your-mouth tender. A nice glass of red wine was the perfect accompaniment. She opted to upgrade to mash and greens for a small extra charge; while the mash was solid, four stalks of broccolini felt a little light on the veg side, but the quality of the steak itself more than made up for it.

The verdict

The inner west's craft beer scene is dynamic, and venues often have to adapt. While it's always a shame to see a local house-brewing setup change course, The Cheeky Pint remains a vibrant, welcoming local hub. Whether you're dropping in for a mid-week steak special, catching up for a weekend pint, or pairing a sharp local IPA with a brilliant parma, it's a Footscray fixture well worth a visit.

GRANT SAYS

Sutton Grange Estate Syrah 2009
ABV 14%, RRP $20

Yes you read that correctly. $20. But there's a bit of a back story. I was enjoying a lovely dinner at my in-laws in country Vic on a chilly Saturday evening. We checked the weather forecast for the next day and it promised sunshine and zero wind. So we thought we'd plan a winery trip. We noticed that Sutton Grange were having a 'fire sale' on a huge range of back vintage wines, age worthy and ready to drink and the offers were as low as $5/bottle. We couldn't resist. So we dined on some excellent pizzas and tapas in their cellar door in front of their blazing fireplace. After lunch, we trundled into the hall and enjoyed a tasting of some outstanding back vintage wines. This 2009 estate Syrah was the pick of the bunch, although the 10+ year old Viogniers were surprisingly excellent. The Syrah was perfectly integrated. Oak and fruit dancing over the palate in complete harmony. Ripe dates and gooey prunes gave way to a black olive tapenade and lashings of dark chocolate and toffee. The length was incredible and the mouthfeel was so well framed by its impressive oaky backbone. It wouldn't hurt to drop them a line and enquire what they still have available. Shipping to your door would certainly be available. Stock up while the getting is good and enjoy some pristine aged delights from this wonderful winery. Or better yet, take a Sunday drive out to their cellar door and make a perfect day trip out to the Victorian countryside.

Pair with: Beef and Guinness stew with carrot and parsnip on a bed of garlic and chive potato mash.

RICHARD SAYS

2025 Stonier Pinot Noir
Mornington Peninsula, Victoria
ABV 13.5%, RRP $45

WINE V WINE

By Richard Slater & Grant Foulkes

Pinot Noir is the variety that thrills with its combination of ethereal, overwhelming aromatics, and incredibly complex, sublime, persistent flavours. The annoyingly erratic top Burgundies (France) cost thousands, and that cost trickles down to their less prestigious wines. It's scarcity, plus bragging.

Yet Pinot Noir can produce terrific wines elsewhere (Oregon, New Zealand and Australia). It's 'merely' a matter of right sites, seasons, treatments - viticulture and winemaking – and wizardry helps too.

Pay extra to avoid weedy strawberry confections or dry red wines devoid of "pinosity". The great wines compensate for the frustrations. Within Australia, quality suspects include Adelaide Hills, Mornington Peninsula and the Yarra Valley.

Stonier dropped off my purchase radar for several years, but this wine tweaked my attention. It's fresh, varietal and delicious – deep ruby colour; add ripe cherries and summer strawberry, plus spices and woodsy notes; then seduction via fleshiness with lingering mixed fresh berry flavours. It has presence, with improvement ahead for a few years if (unlike me) you resist its precocious charms.

Bonus - the Peninsula has stacks of other cellar-doors and sights just over one hour's drive away.

Goes with? Duck, duck and duck. Not in your culinary repertoire? Try a slab of pan-fried tuna, a free-range chook, turkey or a charcuterie platter.

No, you cannot 'biohack' your way out of death

OPINION

By Chloe Davies

Bryan Johnson – the multimillionaire tech entrepreneur behind Project Blueprint – is famous for spending around USD$2 million dollars a year to try and 'defeat death'.

He recently announced that he has an autoimmune disease. Specifically, he was diagnosed with Autoimmune Gastritis (AIG), a chronic condition where the body's immune system mistakenly attacks its own parietal cells in the stomach.

Prior to his diagnosis, Johnson's mission to reverse biological ageing led him to explore a range of health measures ranging from the typical to the obscure.

He is famously known for taking a cocktail over 100 pills a day (a protocol devised by his personal medical team) and in one of his more bizarre experiments, Johnson was infused with his teenage son's youthful plasma whilst Johnson's own plasma was injected into his father.

So, if Bryan Johnson, with all his millions, access to infinite resources, and perfectly optimised data cannot outrun illness, it begs the question: what other factors are at play?

Most of us understand that our health is impacted by what we eat and drink, how we sleep and move.

What most of us don't realise (although we may have a sense) is that so-called 'background' factors — our emotions, relationships, and past traumas, our current internal conflicts, our capacity for joy and play, whether we are pursuing our deepest desires or hiding dark secrets — also shape our physical wellbeing.

The totality of our lives shapes our wellbeing. All the inputs – big and small – have an impact.

It seems like an obvious truth, yet the implications of this can feel elusive to us.

In his book *When the Body Says No*, Physician and author Dr. Gabor Maté explicitly connects autoimmune disease to emotional suppression.

In a recent interview he stated that:

"Autoimmune is rising in our society, and particularly amongst women. When I look at people in my practice who developed auto-immune diseases, it is always related to stress and individual coping styles. Our emotional apparatus is very much connected to our immune system - when our emotions are turned against us, our immune system can as well. There's lots of evidence for that".

Maté is not the only one who draws such conclusions.

In his seminal work, psychiatrist, researcher, and leading authority on post-traumatic stress, Dr. Bessel van der Kolk details how the physiological stress of a traumatised, constantly alarmed nervous system physically breaks down the body over time, resulting in autoimmune dysfunction.

Van der Kolk points out that: "attempts to maintain control over unbearable physiological reactions can result in a whole range of physical symptoms, including fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, and other autoimmune diseases."

Finally, Dr. Lissa Rankin—an integrative medicine physician and New York Times bestselling author who specialises in the nervous system—notes this exact same pattern, tracking how illness flourishes when a patient lives in a state of chronic psychological distress, loneliness, or unfulfilled desires.

In her book, *Mind Over Medicine: Scientific Proof That You Can Heal Yourself*, she states:

"When the mind is filled with fear, anxiety, depression, or loneliness, the amygdala fires a stress response, flooding the body with cortisol and epinephrine, which weakens the immune system and makes the body vulnerable to disease. Only when the mind is at peace can the body's natural self-repair mechanisms function properly".

While Bryan Johnson focuses entirely on the physical inputs (nutrients, sleep cycles, injections), these doctors argue that you cannot truly heal if you are fundamentally at war with yourself internally.

This isn't to say that just because you have emotional imbalances or conflicts that you will get sick. Of course not. It's to say that these are factors of which many of us don't consider and should.

Perhaps Johnson, with all his wonderful discoveries has revealed the best one of all: No, you cannot 'biohack' your way out of life. There is no diet, no supplement, no health protocol, or trend that can outdo chronic past or present conflicts, traumas or emotional stress that leaves its residue in the body and psyche.

Because our emotions cannot be quantified on a spreadsheet or measured by standard tests, we often dismiss them or struggle to attune to them, yet they demand further investigation and resolution.

Our internal worlds, a rich tapestry of emotional nuances, are worth our attention and the future of healthcare is undoubtedly headed in this direction.

Ultimately, we can thank Bryan Johnson for leading us to this conclusion: Bio hacking can only take us so far.

There is much more life to be lived.

Chloe Davies is an English teacher and freelance writer in Melbourne's west.

> The totality of our lives shapes our wellbeing. All the inputs — big and small — have an impact.

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Footscray charity guiding young people with Autism into workplaces

By Tarnia Cooper and Emma Wallis

If someone had told us a few years ago that a conversation in a Footscray classroom would lead to us running a registered charity together, we probably would have laughed.

At the time, we were two solo mums studying Community Services, juggling assignments, parenting, work and everything else life throws at you. Between studies, we talked about more than just our coursework, we spoke about family life, community, and the gaps we could see around us.

Through our studies and community involvement, we noticed the same pattern: capable, talented young people who wanted to connect, gain independence, develop work skills and contribute to their communities, but faced barriers that made those opportunities hard to access.

For many people, walking into a workplace, joining a group activity or starting a conversation is natural. For some neurodivergent young people and people with invisible disabilities, those same experiences can be overwhelming, isolating and sometimes inaccessible without the right support and understanding.

Rather than focusing on what these young people couldn't do, we asked a different question: what could happen if we focused on their strengths?

That question became Linking the Next Steps. There was no grand business plan or major funding announcement. Just two people who believed there had to be a better way. What followed were thousands of hours turning an idea into something real.

We spent evenings, weekends and countless cups of coffee building programs, partnerships and opportunities for the young people we believed in. It wasn't always easy, but every step reinforced why the work mattered.

The work is deeply personal. One of us, Emma, grew up in Yarraville and now lives in Ascot Vale. The other, Tarnia, spends time between Newport and Woodend. Footscray is where we studied, where our ideas took shape and our charity was founded.

With her own lived experience, Tarnia sees the impact of assumptions and stereotypes firsthand. "Stereotypes about Autism still exist in the community and workplaces, but Autism is like a fingerprint unique to every individual." she says.

"The reality is that most people simply need understanding of different communication styles, and others need a chance to feel safe enough to show their strengths and capabilities."

While we're proud of how far Linking the Next Steps has come, what matters most are the small moments. A young person speaking up when they would normally stay quiet. A participant forming a genuine friendship. A teenager deciding they're finally ready to apply for a job. They might seem small, but for the young person experiencing them, they can be life-changing.

Through grants that support our Ignite Pathways Program, Insightful Hub workshop series, and community activities, we help young people build confidence, independence, social connections and employment skills in a welcoming environment. We've also stayed connected to where our journey began.

Linking the Next Steps partners with Victoria University, providing placements for their Diploma of Community Services and Youth Work and Certificate IV in Mental Health students, with a pilot program for Certificate II in Work Education students launching soon.

For LTNS, these placements create learning opportunities for everyone involved. "Some students come in nervous because they've never worked alongside neurodivergent people before," Emma says. "By the end of placement, they realise how individual every person is. They stop focusing on labels and start focusing on people."

Looking ahead, our vision is a permanent community space in the West where participants can access our programs, peer support and mentoring while building practical skills, meaningful connections and a sense of belonging.

We want people to feel like they belong somewhere. Not somewhere they have to mask who they are, but somewhere they can learn, grow, make mistakes safely, and discover what their next step looks like.

For many young people and their families, that support means more than learning new skills. It means finally feeling understood. As one young person recently told us, "I just want people to understand me."

As conversations around neurodiversity grow across schools, workplaces and the community, we hope to play our part in breaking down stigma and looking beyond stereotypes.

Behind every diagnosis, label or invisible disability is a person seeking the same things most of us do: connection, purpose, understanding and a fair go.

Looking back, it's hard to believe a classroom conversation could grow into something that now supports young people across Melbourne's west. But that's exactly what happened.

Everyone deserves the opportunity to take their next step with confidence and to know they don't have to do it alone.

Ask Marie

My partner wants a lot more physical closeness than I do. I love him and I'm attracted to him. I just don't think about it much, and by the end of the day I've got nothing left to give anybody, we have little kids and I'm touched out. He says he feels rejected. I feel like I'm failing at something I'm supposed to want. Is something wrong with me?

No. Mismatched desire for closeness is one of the most common things couples bring to me, and what you've described is a common pattern. Wanting different amounts of closeness is normal. Desire shifts across a relationship for both of you, and it rarely shifts at the same pace or for the same reasons.

So many things affect us: age, illness, parenting responsibility, stress, self-esteem, confidence, medication side effects; the list goes on. That's not incompatibility; it's just what happens if you're together long enough.

The frequency itself is rarely the actual problem. Couples rarely come in because of a number. They come in because of what each of them has decided the number means and how they talk or don't talk about it. One hears a 'no' and reads it as 'I'm not wanted anymore'. The other hears the question and reads it as 'one more person needing something from me tonight.' You're both accurate about your own experience and both potentially wrong about what's going on for the other one.

This is where couples get stuck. One of you starts reaching out more often because the distance is frightening. The other starts pulling back, not because the closeness isn't wanted, but because a hand on the back has stopped being a hand on the back. It's become a question and implication 'will tonight be the night, wink wink ?' so you avoid all contact, just in case they get the wrong idea. You keep the hug short, maybe avoid them altogether; you start going to bed at different times, you might even stop sitting on the same couch.

The result is the thing neither of you wanted. They're reaching out constantly and feeling knocked back and rejected constantly. You're avoiding being touched at all so you don't have to answer the question, and somehow, you both end up starved of the ordinary affection you did actually want. Neither of you is trying to hurt anyone. You're both lonely in the same house for reasons that look completely different from the inside.

There's something else worth knowing. A lot of us grew up assuming desire arrives first, and closeness follows. You feel like it, then you act on it. For plenty of people it doesn't work that way, particularly once life is busy and the relationship isn't new anymore. The wanting turns up partway through rather than beforehand. If you've been waiting to feel like it before you do anything, you'll wait a long time and then decide something's broken in you.

It's also worth looking at what's in the way rather than what would put you in the mood. Exhaustion, resentment, being climbed on by small children all day, a fight from Tuesday that never got sorted, the mental list of everything still undone, a dirty kitchen and an endless pile of laundry.

Three things to try:

- Agree to take the pressure off for a set period and put affection back in with no expectation attached, so a hug can just be a hug, nothing more.
- Have the conversation at a calm time and never in the moment when one of you has just said no.
- Lastly, instead of defending the number and frequency, try naming what's in the way. What would help get you both a level of intimacy and connection that makes you both happy.

You're not failing at anything. Relationships are hard, and it's normal to feel stuck at times or in a rough patch. It's not the end; getting back on track is possible and takes work.

ASK MARIE

Marie Vakakis is an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker and Couples Therapist based in Footscray. She hosts the podcast This Complex Life and answers reader questions monthly in this column. Send your question to askmarie@marievakakis.com.au

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The Muslim Melbourne Run Club providing faith, fitness and community in the West and beyond

By Amber Ammouche

In case you haven't noticed, run clubs are having a moment. If you go looking you'll find a run club for everyone. And now Melbourne has one for Muslims.

The Muslim Melbourne Run Club (MMRC) was founded right here in the West by young Iraqi women Noor Aljawahiri, Dalya Alaraji and Noor Hassin.

MMRC is a run club for folk who share the same faith and enjoy meeting like-minded people while keeping fit. The group meets every Sunday at different locations for a 5km run followed by coffee and mingling. Whether you're trying for a new 'personal best' or haven't run since primary school, all paces are welcome.

The club began after Noor Aljawahiri and Dalya Alaraji both moved to Melbourne from small towns. They felt alone in the big city and were craving a sense of community with like-minded people. Noor Hassin grew up in Melbourne around western culture and customs. The three women met by chance at a gathering hosted by the Iraqi Australian Cultural Group in Melbourne. They bonded over the shared trials and tribulations of being young Muslims in the big city, and as hours passed they brainstormed ideas to grow community but dismissed many of them.

Sure, there are lectures at mosques and community centres, but they wanted to create something different. Eventually a run club for Muslims crossed their minds. A regular, accessible space where young adults can prioritise their physical health while building meaningful friendships with others who share similar values and life experiences, in a relaxed and welcoming environment. This was their major 'aha' moment.

Many cups of tea later, and after merging Instagram pages, MMRC was born. Currently, there are over 900 members, thousands of Instagram followers and the first launch of MMRC merchandise.

MMRC is grounded in Islamic values like ihsan (excellence) which means striving to better ourselves in every aspect of our lives. Another is amnanah (trust), recognising that our bodies are a trust from Allah (God) and that caring for them is a form of gratitude and worship.

Many of those in the group come from immigrant backgrounds where organised sports or recreational running are uncommon or a privilege. Older generations have been focused on building new lives in Australia, hoping for a better future for their children. They've also had to face other challenges such as language barriers and long work hours, but thanks to their sacrifices their children can make health and fitness a part of everyday life.

"While we're united by a shared faith, our members come from a variety of ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds. The club even adjusts their running schedules during Ramadan, celebrating Eid with friends and an environment where no one feels like the odd one out," say the founders.

The weekly runs are less than 5 kms to cater for all fitness levels and paces, but there is also an MMRC sub-group for more seasoned runners taking on longer distances and marathons.

As MMRC grows, the aim is to register as an official group for Melbourne run events.

To join just click their Instagram bio @ muslimmelbournerunclub and fill out the membership form.

"We're so proud to call Melbourne home and grateful to be contributing to the city's vibrant, diverse community by creating another space where people feel connected, active, and can have a true sense of belonging," say the women.

The future for MMRC is a bright one and the club plans hosting brunches in partnerships with local cafes, holding picnics and barbecues, and collaborating with businesses to host fitness activities such as boxing and Pilates.

Wyndham Learning Festival – why lifelong learning matters

By Deborah Sugirthakumar

Learning does not stop when we leave school. It does not stop when we finish university, start a career or become parents. Learning is something we can continue throughout our lives. It can give us confidence, help us connect with others and open doors to new opportunities.

This is the idea behind the Wyndham Learning Festival, a week-long celebration now in its second decade. The Festival brings learning into neighbourhoods across Wyndham through free events run by community groups, businesses and individuals. The 2026 theme, 'Lifelong Learning for a Thriving Future' is a timely reminder that there is always something new to discover.

What makes the festival special is that learning can mean different things to different people. It may be learning a new skill, exploring technology, discovering a hobby, improving wellbeing, developing a business idea or simply meeting people and sharing knowledge.

Former participant Nawaz Marker describes himself as a lifelong learner and says he was grateful to the festival for giving him the opportunity to learn across "so many diverse fields of interest."

For Nawaz, the festival was not just about gaining knowledge. It also created new opportunities. He says the festival introduced him to different learning avenues, including eye-opening sessions about artificial intelligence. Hosting an event through the festival also gave him renewed confidence after moving to Australia, and even helped him gain new clients.

His experience shows why lifelong learning can be so valuable. Learning can help people feel more confident, especially when they are starting a new chapter in life. It can help us adapt to changes in technology and the workplace, while also encouraging us to try things outside our comfort zone.

The experiences shared by other festival participants tell a similar story. One attendee described the program as "diverse, easily accessible" and said they enjoyed and benefited from every event they attended. Another participant learnt basic sewing and how to use a sewing machine, while others discovered new creative activities, meditation, theatre and ways to use ChatGPT for business.

> Learning does not have an expiry date.

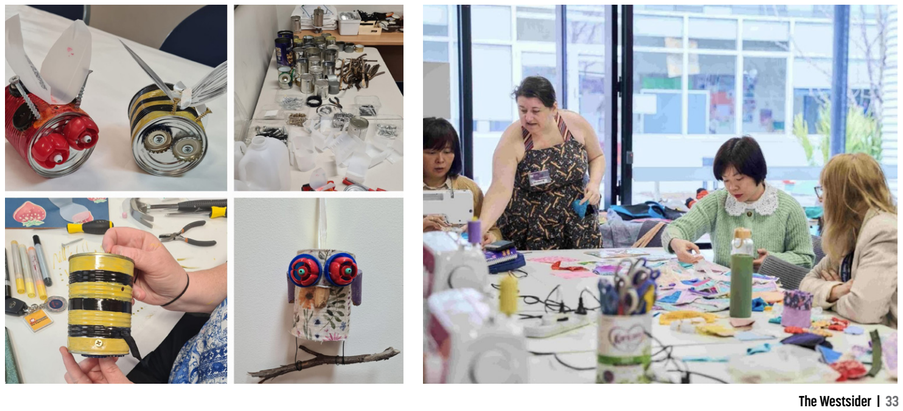
These stories remind us that learning does not always need to happen in a classroom. Sometimes it happens when we try something for the first time, meet someone with a different experience or discover a skill we never knew we had.

Nawaz strongly encourages people who have never attended the festival to take the opportunity. His message is simple: "GO FOR IT!" He believes there is so much to gain, without the financial burden, because the festival provides free learning opportunities for the community.

That is perhaps the greatest strength of the Wyndham Learning Festival. It makes learning accessible to everyone. Whether you are young or old, new to Wyndham or have lived here for years, there is always an opportunity to learn something new.

Learning does not have an expiry date. When we continue learning, we continue growing and when our community grows together, Wyndham becomes a stronger, more connected and thriving place.

The Wyndham Learning Festival takes place from the 1st to the 7th September



KIDS OF THE WEST

SEPTEMBER PUZZLE

This month's puzzle was created by Max from Footscray PS.

Spot the 5 differences and be the first to email your answer to dearkatkats@gmail.com by September 14 to win this awesome prize provided by Invite Me!

Congratulations to April from Footscray PS who solved last month's Book Week word find to win a Sun Bookshop voucher!

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Would you like to learn how to make your very own manga book? Join Max for a two day manga workshop. Bookings via QR code or email dearkatkats@gmail.com!

THE NEWPORT LAKES EXPERIENCE

I've grown up going to the Newport Lakes since I was one year old and it's a good place to go no matter your age. It is a really fun place for everyone to go for walks, dog walking and exploring.

At The Lakes, there's lots of different wildlife ranging from blue tongue lizards and carp, to swans and fairy wrens. There are also a couple of turtles swimming and walking around the Lakes if you have the patience to look for them.

The Lakes was a really good place to visit during lockdown because we couldn't go very far or go anywhere or see anyone. It was great to have a nice, peaceful time after a boring day stuck at home. We went through the bushes, along the water's edge, climbed trees, collected leaves. Someone put up pictures of dragons all around the Lakes, encouraging people to find the set of 10, which was a fun activity during our walks.

Another creative thing we've done at the Lakes is geocaching. You use an app to follow a map through the bush to find the hidden location of the geocache, which is a small box with some trinkets and toys inside. You can write your name on a notepad inside the box, take one of the items, and hopefully put one item in too for someone else to enjoy.

My favourite thing to do is to climb trees and have fun exploring the bush with friends and family. I'm also really good at finding coins at the Lakes, but won't reveal my secret spots!

By Oliver, Emmanuel College

I live near Newport Lakes. At the Lakes, we see animals like snakes, birds, turtles, fish and foxes. I love going fast across the rocks, trying to dodge falling into the water. When we visit, I enjoy the smell of the fresh lakes, the gum trees and other plants. There is lots of wildlife and many trees. Some trees stay green all year, they're called evergreens.

There are two playgrounds. I like the flying fox best. Inside the Lakes is a nursery where you can buy mini plants and you can even find windchimes. I do Park Run at The Lakes on a Saturday morning. It's free to do and you do it for fun, if you want to. Every single time I become even closer to being first. My highest ranking so far is 72.

When we visit the Lakes, I can hear birds whistling, the trees swaying in the wind, and I can hear the water ripple. I like climbing the bouncy tree and swinging back down from one of its big branches. I like to find cool rocks and sticks. But when I'm leaving the Lakes, I leave behind what I have found. I don't take it home. Instead, I leave it near the gate somewhere hidden so no one will see it. As my Mum says, we try to "Take only photos, leave only footprints."

By Sophie, Newport Lakes PS

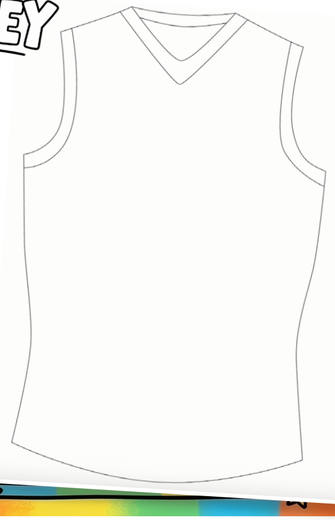
To submit to the Kids of the West page email dearkatkats@gmail.com.

Photo credit: Alan from Photobat

DESIGN YOUR OWN GUERNSEY

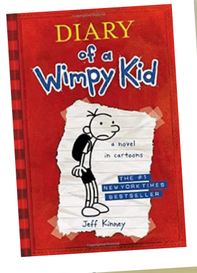
Design a guernsey for your very own footy team and have it featured in next month's Westsider!

Send your designs with a short description to dearkatkats@gmail.com before Sep 14! Good luck!



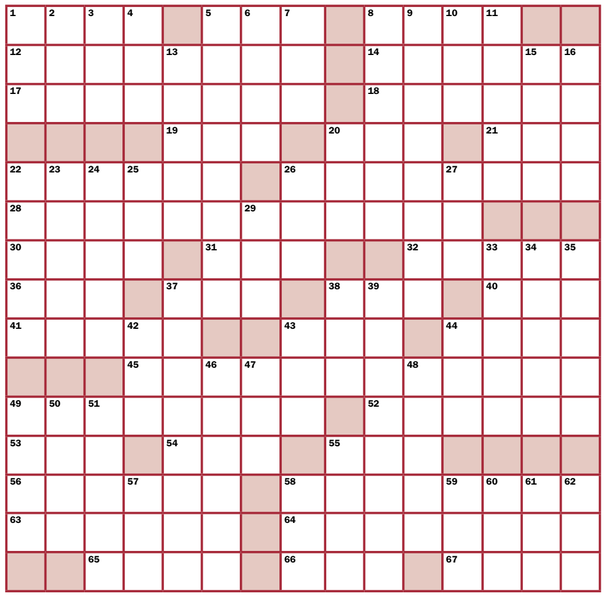
DIARY OF A WIMPY KID REVIEW

By Oscar R, St Augustine's PS



I like the book because I think it's very silly and it's funny. It couldn't happen to people in real life. I would recommend it to my friends if they like those kind of funny/mean characters. The best part was when dad was holding a brick and Greg said, "if you mess up he throws anything he has in his hands at you. Then that a good time to mess up is when he was holding a newspaper!"

Westie crossword



By Eliesha Coxall

Play our puzzles and find solutions online at thewestsider.com.au

ACROSS

1 Soft drink, in American
5 EMT's skill
8 The highest concentration of them in Australia is centered around Daylesford and Hepburn Springs
12 Melbourne's is held in October and finishes inside the MCG
14 Esoteric
17 Red Symons' band
18 What Brisbane's AFL team should've been called pre-1997 (if alliteration weren't so important)
19 '___ is me!'
20 Official air and space force of the UK
21 Like the name Joe, for a barista
22 Rubs out
26 Socceroos more successful counterpart
28 2000 Japanese dystopian action film that 'The Hunger Games' is thought to be based on
30 Meh
31 Aerogard alternative
32 English class assignment
36 The beginning of 'Lord of the Flies'?
37 Nile reptile
38 Toadie's cousin from Colac
40 '___ we there yet?'
41 Alcott or Lewis, e.g.
43 Faucet
44 Ancient Peruvian
45 Levening agent
49 Sidney _____, Neve Campbell's character in 'Scream'
52 Insurance giant of London
53 It's called a seal in Tupperware lingo
54 British singer-songwriter, Rita
55 Labubus, e.g.
56 Word after search or fire
58 John Williamson classic ... or a hint to this puzzle's circled letters
63 Meeting plan
64 A studio doesn't technically have any
65 Skim
66 ... --- ...
67 Between the big sticks, say

DOWN

1 Txt
2 Acorn producer
3 'The ___', 2016 Jane Harper novel
4 Sound often heard at 8-Across, perhaps
5 'Beggars can't be _____'
6 Nostalgic Facebook function (which apparently still exists)
7 They may administer IVs
8 Rice cracker with flavours like Seaweed and Classic BBQ
9 Featured (in a dedicated article)
10 TV program currently hosted by Allison Langdon and Deborah Knight
11 Garden or Greek, e.g.
13 The most massively useful thing an interstellar hitchhiker can have
15 Wine valley
16 Appraisal amts
20 Martin of 10-Down
22 Receded
23 Back-and-forth between Venus and Serena, say
24 In the slightest
25 Dir from Seddon to Williamstown
26 'The ___ Squad'
27 Murray or Twentyman, e.g.
29 Tear
33 Olivia's role in 'Grease'
34 Rainbow-shaped
35 Months and months
37 Outdoor and sporting goods retailer with a serpentine name
38 Game we definitely called tiggy (in Ballarat, in the 80s)
39 Claps
42 Stomach muscles, for short
43 It's dynamite!
44 ___ Jima, World War II battle site
46 Like Kias and Hyundais
47 Cold Chisel song about a Companion of the Order of Australia
48 Born earlier
49 Guilty, for one
50 Gollum's downfall
51 Borders
55 Either of the blanks in '____ heave ho! ____ heave ho!'
57 'Monsters, ___'
58 3 tsp
59 'The ___ of eternal stench'
60 Dunny
61 She played Beatrix in 'Kill Bill'
62 Immigrant's course, briefly

Sudoku

						1	9	
	6	2		3			7	
7	9							
2								
		5		8	9			1
4		3		1				2
				4		2	3	
		7						
1	3						5	

Word scramble

P	U	T
E	S	R
L	C	U

Find as many words with three letters or more as you can using only the letters contained within the 9 squares.

You must use the letter in the centre square.

55 words – Good try
65 words – Getting warmer
75 words – Time to turn pro
85+ words – Limitless genius

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Sonnet

By Fiona Price

This month's sonnet is a reimagining of one of the most-played Australian hits released in the last twenty years. In it, the narrator compares his new, envied relationship with a compelling woman to plunging into a dangerous sea.

A MIGHTY UNDERTOW

Of dentists and of darkness I was scared
Of talk with pretty maidens over tea.
But now in jealousy my friends are snared:
In dreams, they're conjurers whose maid is thee.

My love, 'tis like a mighty undertow
hath called me in and swept me out to sea,
where shadow'd currents whisper what I know:
Thy left-hand man is what I long to be.

My heart is full when singest thou that song
My lumpen throat is aching. 'Tis absurd,
but even though the words are always wrong
'Tis still the sweetest sound I've ever heard.

I could not bear to hear thee say farewell.
Wilt thou abide with me, my love? Pray tell!

The song is Riptide, by Vance Joy.

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

The Westsider is an Independent Newspaper distributing copies each month within the Inner West. We welcome submissions from members of the community of any length including articles, photos and artwork.

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- October 4
- November 1
- December 6

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